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SVĀMĪ VIVEKĀNANDA

A Historical Review

Dr. R. C. MAJUMDAR

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SVĀMĪ VIVEKĀNANDA:

A Historical Review

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IN MEMORIAM

My

Beloved Daughter

SUSAMA

(SANTI SEN)

An Ardent Devotee

of

THAKUR RAMAKRISHNA

and

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

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PREFACE

At the invitation of the University of Patna I delivered a course of three lectures on 10, 11, and 12 February, 1964, on Svāmī Vivekānanda on the occasion of his centenary celebrations. These lectures are printed here together with some passages which could not be read out within the limitations of time for a public lecture. I have added footnotes to indicate my source of information, a select bibliography, index and glossary, as well as some extracts from the English and Bengali writings of the great Svāmī to serve as specimens.

I need hardly add that it was not my intention—nor was it possible—to deal in detail with the ideals, teachings, and activities of a great and complex personality like that of Svāmī Vivekānanda. I have only tried to present in broad outline a short authentic account of such aspects of his wonderful life, versatile mind, and manifold activities as would deeply imprint on the minds of the younger generations a vivid image of one of the greatest sons of India, serving as an inspiration to them to lead a higher and nobler life.

I have avoided all references to the spiritual life, mystic experience, and philosophical ideas of Svāmī Vivekānanda. I am not competent to deal with them and also felt that it would be more appealing to laymen to delineate Vivekānanda as he appeared before the public, and trace the nature and development of his personality in its proper historical setting. In addition to this which I regarded as my main task, I have only touched, very briefly, upon the great

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historical rôle he played in the creation of Modern India. Even this restricted study has proved to be a stupendous task and I am fully conscious, more than anybody else, that I have not been able to do justice to the subject I had chosen for my discourse. I can only crave the indulgence of my readers for my shortcomings and various errors of omission and commission.

As these lectures were delivered under the auspices of a University I have used diacritical marks (such as are used in official Indian epigraphic publications) to ensure correct pronunciation of personal names, though it involved the use of 'Svāmī' for the more familiar 'Swami' generally used by the devotees and monks of the Rāmakṛishṇa Order. I beg of them to excuse this deliberate deviation prompted by a desire to conform to the standard method of transliteration of oriental words adopted by the learned all over the world.

I am grateful to the authorities of the Patna University for having kindly invited me to deliver the lectures on Vivekānanda on the solemn occasion of his centenary celebrations. I take this opportunity to thank Professor E. C. Dimmock of the University of Chicago for having supplied the photostat copy of a newspaper extract reporting a speech of Svāmī Vivekānanda in the Parliament of Religions which has not been hitherto published (reproduced at the end of the book). I also convey my thanks to my old pupil, Sri Suresh Chandra Das, M.A., who has personally supervised the printing and get-up of this book and made many valuable suggestions to make it more useful to the readers. If this small book awakens in any young heart a spirit of reverence for Vivekā-

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nanda and a desire to know more about him, I shall consider my labour amply rewarded. I cannot think of any other person who has a greater claim to be regarded as the true friend, philosopher and guide of the young generations of India in the complexities of life with which they arc faced today.

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Svāmī Vivekānanda

[From a Photograph taken in 1893]

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Chapter One

VIVEKĀNANDA: THE FIRST PHASE OF LIFE

1. *Early Life*

Narendranāth Datta, who was to be distinguished later as Svāmī Vivekānanda, was born on 12 January, 1863, in an upper middle class family in Calcutta. His father, Viśvanāth Datta, was a solicitor, and earned enough money to live in a good style. Narendra was brought up in luxury, and his childhood was marked by a spirit of daring and piety, mingled with a sympathy for the poor, which distinguished him from other children. One unique feature of the boy was his habit of deep meditation even at the tender age of five or six. According to a well-authenticated story, he was once absorbed in such meditation while playing with other children, when a snake suddenly appeared on the scene. The other boys ran pell-mell shouting out to Naren to do the same. But Naren evidently did neither see the snake nor hear the shout, and remained unmoved in the same posture. When he was taken to task by his mother for this strange conduct, he simply replied that during his meditation he was totally unconscious of what happened outside and was all the while experiencing an indescribable bliss in his mind. There are other stories of his falling into a trance—sometimes for a long period—and all this undoubtedly gave him a foretaste of his future life.

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Narendra received a good education according to the standard of the age. He did not distinguish himself either in school or in college, but he exhibited some rare traits from the beginning of his student career. He did not devote much attention to the study of prescribed text-books, but was a voracious reader of books in different branches of knowledge; yet such was his concentration of mind that he easily passed his examinations by merely devoting a few months to the reading of the prescribed texts. Before he sat for the B.A. Examination he had studied the standard treatises on Western Logic and Philosophy, and the history of India and the different countries in Europe. His sharpened intellect, rich store of knowledge, and argumentative ability made a deep impression upon his Professor, William Hastie, Principal of the General Assembly's Institution (now called the Scottish Church College, Calcutta) from which he passed both F.A. and B.A. Examinations. Hastie once remarked to his students: "Naren is really a genius. I have travelled far and wide, but I have never yet come across a lad of his talents and possibilities, even in German Universities, amongst philosophical students. He is bound to make a mark in life".[1] Never was the prophecy of a teacher about his pupil so literally fulfilled.

Narendranāth's deep study of the Western philosophers like Mill, Hume, Descartes, Darwin and Spencer, and his knowledge of the scientific methods and discoveries in Europe wrought a

[1] Disciples. p. 26.

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great change in his life. Two distinct trends are noticed in his new outlook. Though born and brought up in an orthodox Hindu family, his rationalism, derived from the West, could not be reconciled with the traditional faith in Hindu gods and goddesses and the mode of their worship. At the same time, far from being an atheist or sceptic, he had a strong religious bent of mind and never lost faith in the existence of God. The result was an earnest search on his part, in a true scientific spirit, for the unknown ultimate Reality or God. This was a very critical moment in the life of Narendranāth which was destined to shape his future. But before we proceed further it is necessary to have a glimpse of the age in which he lived, for he was partly a product of the age, though he largely transcended it and gave it altogether a new turn.

2. *The Age in which Narendra lived*

The nineteenth century witnessed a great transformation in the culture of Bengal. This was mainly due to the English education, and the impact of Western culture which resulted from it. This contact with the Western ideas took place at a very opportune moment. It was the Age of the French Illumination when the spirit of rationalism and individualism dominated European thought. It proclaimed the supremacy of reason over faith, of individual conscience over outside authority, and brought in its train new conceptions of social justice and political rights. A new ideology suddenly burst forth upon the static life, moulded for

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centuries by a fixed set of religious ideas and social conventions. It gave birth to a critical attitude towards religion and a spirit of inquiry into the origin of State and society with a view to determining their proper scope and functions.

To put it in a concrete form, the most important result of the impact of Western culture on India was the replacement of blind faith in current traditions, beliefs, and conventions—characteristic of Medieval Age—by a spirit of rationalism, which is the distinctive feature of the Modern Age. In short, there was a transition from the Medieval to the Modern Age.

This remarkable change was facilitated by a great personality, Rājā Rāmmohan Roy. He was a typical representative of the New Age. It was he who, for the first time, instituted a rational inquiry into the basis of Hindu religion and society. Though born in a very orthodox Hindu family he boldly challenged the validity of Hindu religious views and social practices on the ground that they were not sanctioned by the Vedas which were recognized by the Hindus as the ultimate source of their religion. In particular, he denounced the belief in a multiplicity of gods and worship of their images, and in 1828 founded the Brāhma Samāj, a non-sectarian religious association which was open to all who believed in one true God. Though Rāmmohan was denounced by the Hindus, he regarded himself as a true Hindu, and never questioned the authenticity of the Vedas. He condemned many current social

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practices of the Hindus, but never denied the supremacy of the Brāhmaṇas nor discarded the sacred thread, the great religious emblem of that class. But revolution, once begun, gains momentum like a ball moving down a slope. His successor, Devendranāth Tagore, called *Maharshi* for his spiritual eminence, denied the infallibility of the Vedas and gave the Brāhma Samāj a distinctly sectarian character. But, otherwise, he kept the movement as much as possible on the old lines of reverence for the Hindu scriptures and the Brāhmaṇas, their sole custodians. A further step was taken by Keshabchandra Sen who seceded with a band of followers and founded a new Brāhma Samāj which cut itself adrift from the Hindu society. He believed in reason as the sole guide for religious and social reforms, without any encumbrance of old beliefs and practices. His eloquence, spiritual greatness and dynamic energy made the Brāhma Samāj a great power in Bengal and extended its influence over other parts of India. In religious and social reforms he swept away the old and began to write on a clean slate, as it were. The Brāhma Samāj under him openly declared itself as outside the pale of Hindu society. There was a still further movement towards the left when the radical members left Keshab and founded another Brāhma Samāj.[2]

[2] For a more detailed account, cf. *Glimpses of Bengal in the Nineteenth Century*, by R C. Majumdar, pp. 52-4.

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3. *The youth of Narendra*

We may now resume the story of Narendranāth. He was born at a time when Keshabchandra was at the height of his power, and the Brāhma Samāj exerted a potent influence on English-educated Bengalis. It was no wonder, therefore, that the rational mind of young Narendranāth would be drawn to the Brāhma Samāj. Apart from the religious and social tenets preached by it, he was powerfully influenced by the integrity of character, charming personality and eloquent sermons on religious and social problems by Keshabchandra Sen. He became an initiated member of the Samāj and regularly attended its prayer meetings. But his enthusiasm was of short duration. He felt a great urge within him for a spiritual life and realization of God or ultimate Reality, and mere intellectual rationalism could not satisfy him. Perhaps the state of his mind at this time is best reflected in the following words, uttered by him in a different context: "First, feel from the heart. What is in the intellect or reason? It goes a few steps and there it stops. But through the heart comes inspiration". Elsewhere he observed: "It is the heart that is of most importance. It is through the heart that the Lord is seen, and not through the intellect. The intellect is only the street-cleaner, cleansing the path for us, a secondary worker, the policeman; but the policeman is not a positive necessity for the workings of society. He is only to stop disturbances, to check wrong-doing,—and that is all the work required of the

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intellect. The intellect is blind and cannot move of itself, it has neither hands nor feet. It is feeling that works, that moves with speed infinitely superior to that of electricity or anything else. Do you feel?—that is the question. Intellect is necessary, for without it we fall into crude errors and make all sorts of mistakes. Intellect checks these; but beyond that, do not try to build anything upon it. It is an inactive, secondary help; the real help is feeling, love."[3]

This attitude was undoubtedly the result of his wide and discriminatory study in College life. It not only distinguishes him from the numerous other youthful votaries of the Brāhma Samāj at the time, but also lifts him to a much higher level over their heads. At the same time, as mentioned above, it ushered in a critical stage in his life which shaped his future destiny. From this time forth he was intoxicated with the idea of God-realization, as distinguished from philosophical knowledge about him. Keshabchandra, of whom he was a devoted follower, obviously could not satisfy his yearning. So we find him turning to the other great Brāhma leader, *Maharshi* Devendranāth Tagore. The young Narendranāth approached him and unreservedly explained to him his spiritual yearning and mental anguish for failure to find out a way for attaining his ends. The *Maharshi* advised him to practise meditation, Narendra saw him every day and received lessons for deep meditation and concentra-

[3] *Lectures*, p. 68; Ranade, 63.

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tion of mind. The *Maharshi* was struck with wonder at the progress of his pupil, but Narendra was not satisfied, as the realization of God eluded him still. Now the scientific spirit got hold of him. He argued in his mind that the *Maharshi* could help him to realize God only if he himself had done so, and was anxious to settle this point. So, one day while the *Maharshi* was living in retirement in a boat on the Gaṅgā, Narendra went straight to him and asked him, in all humility but in an agitated tone, "Sir, have you seen God"? The *Maharshi,* suddenly aroused from deep meditation, looked at the eyes of the young man, and after a few moments' silence, simply observed: "My child, you have got the eyes of a *yogin* (ascetic)". Narendra felt that it was not a direct and affirmative reply, as he expected, but simply one that evaded the real issue. He was sorely disappointed, and put the very same question to several other religious leaders; but the reply was equally unsatisfactory.

4. *Narendra meets Rāmakṛishṇa*

In this state of bewilderment a mere chance brought him into contact with Śrī Rāmakṛishṇa Paramahaṁsa, nominally a priest in the temple of Goddess Kālī at Dakshineswar (about 5 miles north of Calcutta), but whose name and fame as a great saint with wonderful spiritual powers were gradually spreading in Calcutta. Narendranāth first heard of him when he was a student of the General Assembly's Institution. Principal

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Hastie of the College, whose highly appreciative remarks about Narendra have been quoted above, one day referred to Rāmakṛishṇa in the course of his lecture to the class. While teaching the poem 'Excursion' of Wordsworth he referred to the fact that this English poet occasionally fell into deep trance while contemplating the beauty of nature. As the students could not understand what 'trance' meant, he advised them to go and see Rāmakṛishṇa who often exhibited a similar state of body and mind.

The young student Narendranāth did not follow his Professor's advice to see Rāmakṛishṇa at the time, but chance now brought them together. A devotee of Rāmakṛishṇa once invited him and arranged a small party in his house. Music is an essential feature of such gatherings, but as no other musician was available, the host got hold of Narendra, who lived in a neighbouring house and had, after a regular training, acquired distinction as a good singer. Rāmakṛishṇa highly appreciated his songs and asked his devotee host to take the boy to Dakshineswar. But evidently this did not materialize. At last, when Narendranāth was wandering about, asking different religious leaders whether they had seen God, he was reminded of Rāmakṛishṇa by one of his relatives and went to Dakshineswar. The account of this second interview, as given by the devotees of Rāmakṛishṇa, need not be repeated here, for it contains a number of mystic elements, such as his description of Narendra as an incarnation of Nārāyaṇa. There

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is no doubt, however, that Narendra was not favourably impressed, and looked upon him as a monomaniac. There were several other meetings between the two, in course of one of which, at the very touch of Rāmakṛishṇa, Narendra lost his consciousness and felt a unique sensation. At last one day Narendra put to him the crucial question, "Have you seen God"? "Yes", was the prompt reply; "I have seen Him as I am seeing you". What is more, Rāmakṛishṇa further said that he could make Narendra see God.[4]

How far Narendra took him for his words it is difficult to say. But two things are certain. On the one hand, Naren never ceased to test him by all means. On the other, Naren was being gradually attracted towards Rāmakṛishṇa, and grew more and more averse to the affairs of the world. But it was long before he finally surrendered, and accepted Rāmakṛishṇa as his *Guru*. Many things of a supernatural character are recorded about the relations between these two. Leaving them aside one can easily see how Naren had to struggle hard in order to give up his old ideas, one after another, and place implicit faith in the words of Rāmakṛishṇa. The most difficult, perhaps, for this young Brāhma was to look upon the image of Kālī in the temple of Dakshineswar as a divinity. But even on this crucial question, conviction came only when he found it to be a living faith in Rāmakṛishṇa based on actual real-

[4] For a more detailed account, cf. Swami Vivekananda Centenary Memorial Volume, pp. 47-9 and other biographies.

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ization. Rāmakṛishṇa told him that he had personal communion with the Mother Goddess and gave him ample evidence of the same. Naren had already been convinced of the high degree of spirituality possessed by Rāmakṛishṇa. Rāmakṛishṇa's education was of the poorest kind; he read only in the lower classes of the village school and never studied any philosophical book; yet he expounded the highest philosophical doctrines and deep religious truths through simple parables in a marvellous way. In later life Narendra used to say that all his learning and all his ideas were derived from Rāmakṛishṇa. The latter never gave any systematic exposition of any philosophy or religious doctrine—indeed he was incapable of it. But his short discourses and parables, some of which were recorded even in his lifetime, and well-authenticated events of his life give us a glimpse of his views, and we can easily perceive how deeply they must have affected Narendra who later gave expression to them in an elaborate and logical form in his own writings. It is necessary, therefore, to refer to some of the characteristic teachings of Rāmakṛishṇa which shaped the future ideas and career of Narendra to a large extent.

5. *Life and Teachings of Rāmakṛishṇa*

The main theme of Rāmakṛishṇa's discourses was the realization of God as the highest human ideal, attainable only by development of high spiritual life. This was only possible by discarding desire for material prosperity (*vishaya-vāsanā*)

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and lure for gold and women (*kāminī-kāñchana*), and turning all thoughts and actions towards God. But this did not require renunciation of worldly life which, he held, was fully compatible with spiritual development if the aim of realizing God were steadily kept in view, and the ultimate Reality—Soul or God as distinct from the evanescent world—were never lost sight of. When asked, 'how can passion be eliminated?' his reply was, 'why should it be eliminated? Give it a new turn and direct it towards God'. This idea was illustrated by several parables, two of which may be quoted:

"As an unchaste woman, busily engaged in household affairs, is all the while thinking of her secret lover, even so, O! thou man of the world, do thy round of worldly duties; but fix thy heart always on the Lord."

"As a wet-nurse in a rich family brings up the child of her master, loving the baby as if it were her own, but knows well that she has no claim upon it; so think ye also that you are but trustees and guardians of your children whose real father is the Lord God in Heaven".[5]

Next in importance is the revelation of the harmony of all religions. Rāmakṛishṇa demonstrated by precept as well as example that all the different religions are true in their essence, and

[5] Max Müller, p. 179. Max Müller evidently got this account from Svāmī Vivekānanda when the latter met him in London, as will be related later. The biographies of Rāmakṛishṇa also refer to his *sādhanā* in various forms, except according to Christian rite.

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may lead to salvation if properly pursued. He is said to have himself tested, by experiment, the efficacy of the diverse modes of *sādhanā* or spiritual discipline prescribed by different religions. He was first initiated into the *Tāntrik* mode of *sādhanā*. He practised it for two years and passed successfully through all the stages. He then followed the mode of *sādhanā* laid down by the *Vaishṇava* cult, and is said to have obtained a vision of *Kṛishṇa*. He was next formally initiated into ascetic life by Totāpurī, a great saint who had realized in his life the highest truths of Vedānta, and practised the Vedāntic *sādhanā*. Rāmakṛishṇa was then initiated into the *Sūfī* doctrine of Islam and followed all the rites prescribed by the religion. He ate and dressed like a Muslim, offered regular prayers to Allah, ceased to visit Hindu temples, and in three days obtained the vision of God. Later, he practised similar *sādhanā* according to Christian rite, and on the third day obtained the vision of Jesus Christ.[6]

Thus he made his own life a laboratory for the synthesis of different systems of religion—a wonderful synthesis of higher forms of spiritual discipline with rituals and ceremonies; of *sākāra* (God with form) with *nirākāra* (God without form); of Vedānta with devotion; of rationalism with emotion and intuition; of asceticism with social and domestic life. This great harmony of different religions of the world which he actually

[6] *Śrī Śrī Rāmakṛishṇa Līlā Prasaṅga* (in Bengali), Vol. II. Chapters X—XVI. Nikhilananda, p. 11.

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established by personal test was expressed in four simple words—*Yata mat tata path*—every religion is a path to salvation. He was asked, how God could be both *sākāra* (with form) and *nirākāra* (without form). He replied, 'exactly as water can exist in a liquid, solid (ice) and invisible (gaseous) form'. He further said, "as water is called by different names in different languages, so different religions call God by different names like Hari, Śiva, Allah, Christ, etc., but all denote the same God".

He was asked: "If the God of every religion is the same, why is it then that the God is painted differently by different religionists?" He answered: "God is one, but His aspects are different: as one master of the house is father to one, brother to another, and husband to a third, and is called by these different names by those different persons, so one God is described and called in various ways according to the particular aspect in which He appears to His particular worshipper. In a potter's shop there are vessels of different shapes and forms—pots, jars, dishes, plates—but all are made of one clay. So God is one, but is worshipped in different ages and countries under different names and aspects." This catholicity of views may be regarded as a great contribution of Rāmakṛishṇa to the modern world which religion has divided into so many water-tight compartments. It was also the main and constant theme of Narendranāth's discourse in the Parliament of Religions in U.S.A. which gave him the position of a World-teacher.

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But it was not merely these wise sayings and reported incidents of Rāmakṛishṇa's life which convinced Narendra. He had more visible and positive evidence of the extraordinarily powerful spiritual powers of Rāmakṛishṇa. The Vedāntic concept of the immortal spirit or soul, as distinct from the mortal physical body which merely serves as its cloak, was well known; spiritual life and the means to attain it were described in ancient Hindu scriptures. All these were, however, either forgotten or disbelieved in this scientific age. But Rāmakṛishṇa, both by precept and example, brought it home to an incredulous world, above all to the sceptic and rational Narendranāth.

Rāmakṛishṇa fell into *samādhi* or ecstatic trances on merely hearing of God or thinking of Him. Max Müller, who presumably got his information from Narendranāth many years later, describes it as follows: "During the state of *samādhi* he was totally unconscious of himself and of the outward world. At one time he fell down upon a piece of live coal during this stage. It burned deep into his flesh, but he did not know for hours, and the surgeon had to come in to extract the coal, when he came back to consciousness, and felt the wound".[7] It has again and again been witnessed by many that his body showed contortions by way of a sharp reaction to the touch of anything impure. Once a woman touched her feet and he automatically shrank back, and it was later found out that she was a bad woman. Like

[7] Max Müller. p. 59.

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many other saints, he had aversion to wealth and refused with scorn the gift of money and costly things. But what was peculiar in him is that he could not bear the touch of gold or silver coins, and even a coin placed under his bed without his knowledge would produce physical contortions.[8] He was renunciation incarnate, and detachment from everything was the chief tenor of his life.

The story has often been told by many eyewitnesses how, sitting on the bank of the Gaṅgā, he used to take a clod of earth in his hand and muttered, "money is earth, earth is money". At sight he could read the souls of those who approached him. The moment he saw Narendranāth (future Vivekānanda) he instinctively felt that here was the man of destiny that would carry his spiritual message all over the world. According to a well-authenticated story, to be related later, Rāmakṛishṇa, shortly before his passing away, transmitted all his spiritual powers to Vivekānanda who, when at the height of his power and glory, used to say that Rāmakṛishṇa could create hundreds of Vivekānanda if he willed. Rāmakṛishṇa seemed to possess the intuitive knowledge of good and evil.

As mentioned above, Rāmakṛishṇa did not regard the household life incompatible with a life of strict renunciation and realization of God, if one could be free from the lure of *kāminī* (woman) and *kāñchana* (gold). He himself set a marvellous example of it. At the age of twenty-four

[8] Ibid., 58.

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he had married Sāradā, a girl of five. When Rāmakṛishṇa was spending a God-intoxicated life at Dakshineswar, reports were carried to his village home that he had gone mad, and Sāradā-devī, then 17 years old, came to see him. Rāmakṛishṇa received her kindly, but said he could not look upon her as his wife, for he saw in her the Goddess Kālī. So saying, he addressed her as mother and worshipped her with flowers and incense. But Sāradā was the worthy wife of a worthy husband. She said, she wanted nothing from him as her husband except that he should teach her how to realize God and allow her to stay with him to cook his meals and look to his health and comfort. This arrangement continued till the last day of Rāmakṛishṇa's life, a detached room outside the temple compound being set apart for her residence. Though preaching against carnal passion, Rāmakṛishṇa did not hate women nor tried to avoid them as source of evils. "One day, when the discussion turned to the need of celibacy, Hari (one of his devotees) said with an air of bravado, 'Oh, I hate women, I cannot even bear their presence'. Instead of encouraging him, the Master came out with the sharp rebuke, 'How foolish! What do you mean by hating women? They are the representations of the Mother of the universe. You should look upon them as your mother and honour them'. As an eminent European scholar has justly observed, "Rāmakṛishṇa was a visible embodiment of the spiritual attainment of India during three thousand years."

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6. *Narendra, a devotee of Rāmakṛishṇa*

A close and intimate contact with Rāmakṛishṇa in such an atmosphere, for several years, removed all doubts from the mind of Narendranāth and he accepted Rāmakṛishṇa as his *Guru*. Though still continuing the worldly life as before, he developed high spiritual powers. An instance of this, which also throws in striking relief the character and personality of Narendra, may be cited here. Early in 1884, when he was only twenty-one and had just appeared at the B.A. Examination, his father died, leaving the family in very straitened circumstances. Though Narendra passed the B.A., he could not secure any employment, and was hard put to it to maintain his widowed mother and younger brothers. But in spite of all his hardships he continued his usual visit to Rāmakṛishṇa at Dakshineswar. At last, unable to bear the distress of the family, and in sheer desperation, he fell at the feet of Rāmakṛishṇa and requested him to approach the Goddess Kālī on his behalf. Rāmakṛishṇa asked him to go himself and ask the favour of the deity. Narendra went to the temple, but as soon as he stood before Kālī he found in her the Mother-Goddess in a living visible form. He forgot the worldly affairs and, prostrating himself before her, prayed that he might be endowed with true knowledge and a spirit of devotion and renunciation. When on his return he was questioned by Rāmakṛishṇa, he remembered that he had forgot to pray to the Mother to remove his misery. He was sent back, and again a third time, but with

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no better result. About the same time he was offered a rich dowry which would have placed the family above all wants, but Narendra refused to marry. He was assured by Rāmakṛishṇa that his family would not be wanting in bare necessaries of life, and so it turned out, as Naren could secure some jobs. But he redoubled his efforts to profit by the precepts and example of Rāmakṛishṇa, who initiated him into the Vedāntic theory of the Divinity of Man. The preaching of this doctrine as expounded by Rāmakṛishṇa and actually practising it became the mission of Narendra's life.

Narendra was not destined to enjoy for long the society of his *Guru,* for on 16th August, 1886, a little more than four years after the two had met for the first time, Rāmakṛishṇa left his mortal frame. There is no doubt that Naren was his most favourite disciple, and Rāmakṛishṇa prepared him to be the head of the group of sincere devotees who would carry out the Master's mission after he passed away. He never concealed his feeling about Naren's future destiny. When Naren implored the *Guru* to show him the way to *nirvikalpa samādhi*—the attainment of final bliss after sundering all earthly ties—he was administered a sharp rebuke. "Fie on you!" exclaimed Rāmakṛishṇa, "I never thought you so mean as to be anxious for your own salvation only whereas you have powers to do so much good to mankind". At his insistent request the *Guru* one day gave him a glimpse of it. As Narendra himself narrated later, he experienced

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a state in which "the knowledge, knower and known become one indivisible consciousness, and the self, shattering the prison of matter, merges in the infinite glory of Brahman. At about 9 o'clock at night Naren returned to normal consciousness but his heart was still filled to overflowing with ineffable ecstasy. After a while when Naren prostrated himself before Śrī Rāmakṛishṇa, he tenderly said to him: 'Now then, the Mother has shown you everything. Just as a treasure is locked up in a box, so will this realization you have just had lie locked up and the key shall remain with me. You have work to do. When you will have finished my work, the treasure box will be unlocked again, and you will know everything then just as you do now'. Afterwards the Master said to the other disciples that the moment Naren would realize who he was, he would pass away of his own will. The time also was not far when he would shake the world to its foundations through the strength of his intellectual and spiritual powers."[9] Another mysterious incident of the same genre narrated by Narendra himself has been described as follows: "Knowing that his end was imminent, the Master, in order to endow Naren with the spiritual wealth which he himself had acquired after years of superhuman efforts and unprecedented austerities, called him to his side only three or four days before his *mahāsamādhi*. Having seated him in front and looking intently into the eyes of his dear disciple, he fell into a deep trance. Naren felt

[9] *Cent. Vol.*, pp. 60-1.

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the powerful impact of a tremendous force passing into his own body and soon lost all body consciousness. When, after a while, Naren came to himself, the Master was found shedding tears. When interrogated, Śrī Rāmakṛishṇa softly replied, 'Oh Naren, today I have given you my all and have become a *fakir* (beggar). By the force of the power transmitted by me, great things will be done by you; only after that, will you go to whence you came".[10]

7. *Beginnings of Monastic Life*

The passing away of Rāmakṛishṇa proved a great shock to all his disciples and cut off the bond that had hitherto held them together. They were young and without any means, and could not rent any house where they could live together. The incipient organization was thus threatened with dissolution when a lay devotee hired for them a dilapidated house at Baranagore. Some of the disciples had gone back home, but Narendranāth persuaded them to come back, and thus set up the nucleus of a monastery. Though he was the unquestioned leader, he still lived in his own house, but regularly visited the monastery. It was not till the end of December, 1886, that there was a regular ceremony in which the young devotees took the vow of leading a life of renunciation, celibacy and poverty, with a view to the realization of God. Each of them gave up his worldly name and assumed a name suitable for a monk, ending

[10] Ibid., 61.

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in *ānanda*. Narendranāth also assumed several monastic names, such as Vividishānanda, and Sachchidānanda, and finally took the name Vivekānanda.

The handful of monks passed their days in the dilapidated house in dire distress. Vivekānanda himself gave the following grim picture of it at a later date: "There have been days when the Math was without a grain of food. If some rice was collected by begging, there was no salt to take it with! On some days there would be only rice and salt, but nobody cared for it in the least. We were then being carried away by a tidal wave of spiritual practice. Boiled Bimba leaves, rice and salt—this was the menu for a month at a stretch. Oh, those wonderful days! The austerities of that period were enough to dismay supernatural beings, not to speak of men".[11]

But this is only one side of the picture. The wants and hardships could not abate by a jot the spiritual yearnings of the young monks whose unprecedented enthusiasm for spiritual exercise triumphed over the miseries and dismal surroundings. Vivekānanda acted the part of a true leader and fulfilled the last desire of his Master. Romain Rolland has described his role in the following words: "He (Naren) kept its members ever on the alert; he harried their minds without pity; he read them the great books of human thought; he explained to them the evolution of the universal

[11] *C.W.*, VII, 249.

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mind; he forced them to dry and impassioned discussion of all the great philosophical and religious problems; he led them indefatigably towards the wide horizons of boundless truth, which surpass all the limits of schools and races, and embrace and unify all particular truths. This synthesis of spirit achieved the promise of Śrī Rāmakṛishṇa's message of love. The unseen Master presided over their meetings. They were able to place their intellectual labours at the service of his universal heart".[12]

8. *The Life of a Wandering Monk*

The foundation of the monastery at Baranagore marks the end of the first and the beginning of the second phase in the life of Narendranāth whom we shall henceforth call by his monastic name, Svāmī Vivekānanda. He spent two years in consolidating the newly founded monastic organization, and then felt a stirring call to visit as a *Paribrājaka* (wandering monk) the holy places of India. In 1888 he started on his tour and proceeded to the bosom of the Himalayas, visiting on his way Varanasi, Ayodhya, Lakhnau, Agra and Vrindavan. But he could not bear the rigours of the journey and the Himalayan climate, and returned to Baranagore. The trekking to the Himalayas was repeated in 1890. But in 1891 he changed his plan. His spiritual instincts had so long drawn him to the Himalayas. There he not only enjoyed to the full the splendid scenery and the majestic grandeur of the Himalayas, but felt purified by treading the

[12] Rolland, 12.

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path hallowed by the ascetics and seekers of spiritual truth in India since time immemorial. But now suddenly he felt an urgent call to see Modern India as it really was. It was again a turning point in his career. It has been mentioned above, how eager he was to enjoy the spiritual bliss for eternity, but his Master sternly admonished him, saying that he had a nobler mission than achieving his own salvation, and was destined to do great deeds in this world of suffering humanity. It is very likely that the voice of the Master now prevailed upon him. It is highly significant that whenever he left the monastery at Baranagore for Himalayan tours, he parted with the words, 'I shall not return'. But every time he did return. Whatever might have impelled him to do so, one thing is certain. If he chose to live a life of recluse in the Himalayas, as he ardently desired and might easily have done, he would have merely added to the number of the great ascetics who had never been wanting in India, but there would not have been any Vivekānanda as we know him today. Fortunately for humanity, he triumphed over the lure of the Himalayas and turned his gaze to the people of India. During his Himalayan pilgrimage he had always a brother-monk to keep him company. But this time when he left Delhi in February, 1891, he completely cut himself off from his brother-monks and wandered all alone, with a staff and a begging bowl in his hand. It is not possible to give even a brief account of this journey which extended over two years. The

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saffron-robed monk trekked through Rajputana, Gujarat, Bombay, Mysore, Malabar, Madura and Rameswar right up to Cape Comorin, the southernmost tip of Indian Peninsula. He visited the cottages of the poor and the untouchables as well as the palaces of ruling chiefs; held discussions with erudite Sanskrit scholars singly or in conference; and made a deep impression upon all classes of people, high and low, rich and poor, by his learning and scholarship, spiritual outlook, suavity of temper and urbanity of manners. He also took every opportunity of preaching the gospels of his Master in a homely way. One instance may be cited. In course of his conversation with the ruler of Alwar, Mahārājā Maṅgal Singh, the latter remarked: "I have no faith in idol worship. I cannot worship wood, earth, stone or metal". Without saying a word, Svāmījī had a picture of the Mahārājā, hanging on the wall, brought down and asked the *Dewan* to spit on it. Everybody present was horrified at the suggestion. Svāmījī said: "This is not the Mahārājā but only a piece of paper, and yet you feel that to spit upon it would be insulting your master!" Then turning to the Mahārājā he added: "See, your Highness, though this is not you in one sense, in another sense it is you. That was why your devoted servants were so perplexed when I asked them to spit on it. It has a shadow of you; it brings you into their minds. One glance at it makes them see you in it. Therefore they look upon it with as much respect as they do upon your own person. Thus it is with

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the devotees who worship stone and metal images of gods and goddesses. It is because an image brings to their minds their *Ishṭa,* or some special form and attributes of the Divinity, and helps them to concentrate, that the devotees worship God in an image. They do not worship the stone or the metal as such. Everyone is worshipping, O Mahārāja, the same one God who is the Supreme Spirit, the Soul of pure knowledge. And God appears to all even according to their understanding and their representation of Him". The Mahārājā was overwhelmed with emotion; he apologised to Svāmījī and became very much devoted to him.[13]

By such frank talks he gained the friendship and esteem, bordering on sincere devotion, of several other ruling chiefs, specially the Mahārājās of Mysore and Travancore. He made some uncharitable remarks about the courtiers of the Mahārājā of Mysore in their presence, and the Mahārājā was afraid that they might conspire against his life. When the Mahārājā in a private conversation warned him of this danger, the Svāmī boldly replied: "A *sannyāsin* is never afraid of telling the truth". The Mahārājā was so pleased with the Svāmī that he consulted him on various matters concerning his State.

The Rājā of Ramnad was so much impressed that he ultimately accepted him as his *Guru.* Svāmījī spoke to all these Chiefs the necessity of

[13] *Cent. Vol.,* 68-9; Nikhilananda, 47.

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spreading education among the masses and improving their economic condition.

But Svāmījī did not merely teach others; he himself also learnt a good deal. Two incidents may be mentioned to illustrate this. The first may be summed up in his own words:

"One day I was travelling on foot from Agra to Vrindaban when I found a man smoking on the roadside, and I was seized with a desire to smoke. I said to the man, 'Hallo, will you let me have a puff at your *chillum*?' He seemed to be hesitating greatly and said, 'Sire, I am a sweeper'. Well, there was the influence of old *saṁskāras* and I immediately stepped back and resumed my journey without smoking. I had gone a short distance when the thought occurred to me that I was a *sannyāsin*, who had renounced caste, family, prestige, and everything—and still I drew back as soon as the man gave himself out as a sweeper, and could not smoke at the *chillum* touched by him! The thought made me restless at heart; then I had walked on half a mile. Again I retraced my steps and came to the sweeper whom I found still sitting there. I hastened to tell him, 'Do prepare a *chillum* of tobacco for me, my dear friend'. I paid no heed to his objections and insisted on having it. So the man was compelled to prepare a *chillum* for me. Then I gladly had a puff at it and proceeded to Vrindaban."[14]

The next incident is still more interesting and instructive. Svāmījī was invited by the Mahārājā

[14] *C.W.*, VII. 251.

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of Khetri, his initiated disciple, to a musical entertainment by a dancing girl. Though Svāmījī was living in a tent quite close by, he refused to attend, as it was against the rules of monastic discipline. The girl was very much mortified and sang a song of the great Vaishṇava saint Sūradās. The burthen of the song will be evident from the following opening lines:

> *"O Lord, look not upon my evil qualities!*
> *Thy name, O Lord, is Same-sightedness,*
> *One piece of iron is in the image in the temple.*
> *And another is the knife in the hand of the butcher;*
> *But when they touch the philosopher's stone,*
> *Both alike turn to gold."*

As soon as these lines reached the ears of Svāmījī he was immediately reminded of the Vedāntic doctrine that the Divinity dwells in all and knows no distinction of caste, creed, colour or sex. So he immediately joined the party. Referring to this incident, later in life, Svāmījī said: "That incident removed the scales from my eyes. Seeing that all are indeed the manifestations of the One, I could no longer condemn anybody."[15]

[15] *Cent. Vol.*, 70-1. A slightly different version is given in the Bengali Biography, *Svāmī Vivekānanda*, Vol. II, pp. 258-9, which also quotes the original song. According to this version Svāmījī was in the party but proposed to leave it when the dancing girl was about to sing. At the special request of the Mahārājā he resumed his seat. After the song was over Svāmījī felt that the woman had taught her that everything is Brahman. He said to himself: "How difficult it is to comprehend the idea. Even I, an ascetic, thought that I was a *sannyāsin* and she was a depraved woman. I have not yet got rid of such feeling of distinction (*bheda-jñāna*)." He went to the woman and said:

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Svāmījī also took every opportunity to widen his knowledge. 'At Khetri he became the pupil of the foremost Sanskrit grammarian of the time. At Ahmedabad he completed his knowledge of Muhammadan and Jain culture. At Porebandar he stayed three quarters of a year, in spite of his vow as a wandering monk, to perfect his philosophical and Sanskrit studies with learned paṇḍits; he worked with a court paṇḍit who translated the Vedas.'[16]

The significance of these two years of travel—years of apprenticeship—has been thus described by the French savant Romain Rolland in his masterly way: "He wandered, free from plan, caste, home, constantly alone with God. And there was no single hour of his life when he was not brought into contact with the sorrows, the desires, the abuses, the misery, and the feverishness of living men, rich and poor, in town and field; he became one with their lives; the great Book of Life revealed to him what all the books in the libraries could not have done (for after all they are only collections), which even Rāmakṛishṇa's ardent love had only been able to see dimly as in a dream—the tragic face of the present day, the God struggling in humanity, the cry of the peoples of India and of the world for help, and the heroic duty of the new Oedipus, whose task it was to deliver Thebes from the talons of the Sphinx or to perish with Thebes.

"Mother! I am guilty. I was going to leave as I hated you. Your song opened my eyes."

[16] Rolland, 23.

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"*Wanderjahre. Lehrjahre.* What a unique education. . . . He was not only the humble little brother, who slept in stables or on the pallets of beggars, but he was on a footing of equality with every man, today a despised beggar sheltered by pariahs, tomorrow the guest of princes, conversing on equal terms with Prime Ministers and Maharajas, the brother of the oppressed bending over their misery, then probing the luxury of the great, awakening care for the public weal in their torpid hearts. He was as conversant with the knowledge of the pandits as with the problems of industrial and rural economy, whereby the life of the people is controlled, ever teaching, ever learning, gradually making himself the Conscience of India, its Unity and its Destiny. All of them were incarnate in him, and the world saw them in Vivekananda.

. . . . .

"He received no less than he gave. His vast spirit never for a single day failed to widen its knowledge and its experience, and it assimilated all the rivers of thought scattered and buried in the soil of India, for their source seemed to him identical. As far removed from the blind devotion of the orthodox, who were engulfed in the muddy stench of stagnant waters, as from the misguided rationalism of the reformers of the Brahmo Samaj, who with the best intentions were busied in drying up the mystic fountains of hidden energy, Vivekananda wished to preserve and to harmonise them all by draining the whole

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entangled reservoir of the waters of a whole continent possessed by a deeply religious soul."[17]

The knowledge and experience that Svāmījī gathered during his all-India travel proved a turning point in his career. He had now a first-hand knowledge of the poverty, ignorance, distress and misery of the masses of India, and these deeply touched the chord of his heart. He also realized how even the so-called upper and educated classes, dazzled by the glory and greatness of Western nations, had totally forgotten the glory and greatness of their own ancient culture, and how through foreign subjection for centuries they had lost their vigour of mind and body, and had sunk to the level of slaves with no consciousness of the present degradation nor any hope for the future. The story has often been told how at Cape Comorin he worshipped the Goddess at the temple on the seashore and then swam across to a neighbouring rock jutting out of the sea. Seated there with the whole of India in his front, he plunged into a deep meditation and had vivid glimpses of India that was, India that is, and India that he envisaged for the future. As a result of this meditation he saw his future path clear before him. He remembered his Master's saying that "religion is not for empty bellies", and took a solemn vow that henceforth he would sacrifice that eternal bliss of *nirvikalpa samādhi* or final salvation for himself, and consecrate his life to the liberation of his countrymen, rather than of his own.

[17] Ibid., 21-3.

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Chapter Two

SVĀMĪ VIVEKĀNANDA IN THE WEST

1. *The object of visit to America*

The meditation at Cape Comorin ushered in a new phase in the life of Vivekānanda. Gradually the idea of visiting America to attend the Parliament of Religions gained ground in his mind. The idea had struck him some time before, during his trekking all over India. When he had broached it to the Mahārājā of Mysore, the latter became so enthusiastic about it that he offered to bear all the expenses. But Svāmījī declined it as he had not yet finally made up his mind. It undoubtedly received an impetus at Cape Comorin. When he proceeded thence to Madras and publicly announced his intention, a band of his devotees and admirers began to collect money for the purpose. When he next visited Hyderabad, the Nizam offered him financial help. But as the project took a definite shape, his mind was seized with doubts about its success. According to the views of his disciples, a miraculous circumstance helped him to come to a final decision. It was the vision, in a dream, of Rāmakṛishṇa walking over the sea and beckoning him to follow. He looked upon it as the approval of his Master and wrote to the Holy Mother, who immediately conveyed her blessings. Svāmījī now made up his mind. The Mahārājā of Khetri made all arrangements for his voyage to America. It

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was at the Mahārājā's request that Svāmījī assumed the name of Vivekānanda shortly before he left for America on 31st May, 1893, on board the ship, *Peninsular*.

Much has been written about the objects which Svāmījī had in view in undertaking this journey to America. At Mysore, when the idea was in an initial stage, Svāmījī described his mission to be to preach the philosophical and spiritual truths of India, especially the Vedānta, to the Western nations. To his devotees at Madras he said that he was going to the West for the 'people and the poor'. On his way to Bombay to board the ship, i.e., almost immediately before his departure, he met two brother-monks, to whom he explained his object as follows: "I have now travelled all over India .... But alas, it was agony to me, my brothers, to see with my own eyes the terrible poverty and misery of the masses, and I could not restrain my tears. It is now my firm conviction that it is futile to preach religion amongst them without first trying to remove their poverty and their sufferings. It is for this reason—to find more means for the salvation of the poor of India—that I am now going to America". Unfortunately, he never explained what were the means which he hoped to find in America.

The Parliament of Religions, to be held at Chicago, might have served as an impetus, but it was probably not the main, and certainly not the original, object. When the young devotees of Madras began to collect subscriptions for send-

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ing him to the Parliament as a delegate of the Hindus, Svāmījī told them that he might not after all attend the Parliament at all.[1] As a matter of fact, he did not even carry out the formalities required for selection as a delegate to the Parliament. On his return from America, Svāmījī declared in his public speeches that he went to America and England "simply for propagating certain ideas." He "did not care at all for the Parliament of Religions or anything else, it was simply an opportunity; for it was really those ideas of mine that took me all over the world". These ideas, which were expounded in some detail, may be summed up in his own words, as far as possible: "First of all, to bring out the gems of spirituality that are stored up in our books and in the possession of a few only .... I want to make them popular. I want to bring out these ideas and let them be the common property of all, of every man in India, whether he knows the Sanskrit language or not."[2]

Again, Svāmījī, in a speech at Madras, asked his audience: "Do you feel that millions and millions of the descendants of gods and of sages have become next-door neighbours to brutes? Do you feel that ignorance has come over the land as a dark cloud? Does it make you restless? Does it make you sleepless?" Then he continued: "I did not go to America, as most of you know, for the Parliament of Religions, but this demon of a feeling was in me and within my soul. I travelled twelve

[1] *C.W.*, VII. 468.
[2] *Lectures*, 103; *C.W.*, III. 290.

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years all over India, finding no way to work for my countrymen, and that is why I went to America. Most of you know that, who knew me then. Who cared about this Parliament of Religions? Here was my own flesh and blood sinking every day, and who cared for them? This was my first step."[3] But in neither of these speeches did Svāmījī care to explain how his trip to the West would be helpful in extending spiritual knowledge to the Indian masses or to the growth of feeling for their misery.

On the other hand, reference may be made to several eminent men, including at least one English member of the I.C.S., who were so much struck by Svāmījī's knowledge and exposition of ancient Indian culture that they urged him to go to Western countries. While Svāmījī was impressed by this insistence, he was undoubtedly influenced by another idea, namely the supreme need of India to learn the modern scientific ideas of the West, and hence the necessity of establishing close personal contact with Western countries. But, at least at the beginning, Svāmījī had no special preference for America, as he told the representative of a London magazine in 1896. "It was a mere accident", he said, "that the Parliament of Religions was held at Chicago and not in London as it ought to have been". In several speeches Svāmījī is reported to have said that he went to America because India failed him.[4] This is echoed in his speech at Madras, quoted above,

[3] *Lectures*, 68-9; *C.W.*, III. 225-6.
[4] *Cent. Vol.*, 202.

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in which he said that in India he found no way to work for his countrymen and that is why he went to America. Here, again, we are left in the dark as to the real significance of this expression. Far more intelligible is another passage in the same speech in which he said: "That I went to America was not my doing, or your doing, but the God of India who is guiding her destiny, sent me and will send hundreds of such to all the nations of the world. No power on earth can resist it. This also has to be done. You must go out to preach your religion, preach it to every nation under the sun, preach it to every people. This is the first thing to do. And after preaching spiritual knowledge, along with it will come that secular knowledge and every other knowledge that you want".[5] But the best and most comprehensive exposition is contained in a speech from which we quote a long extract:

"With all my love for India, and with all my patriotism, and veneration for the ancients, I cannot but think that we have to learn many things from other nations. ... At the same time we must not forget that we have also to teach a great lesson to the world. We cannot do without the world outside India; it was our foolishness that we thought we could, and we have paid the penalty by about a thousand years of slavery. That we did not go out to compare things with other nations, did not mark the workings that have been all around us,

[5] *Lectures*, 67; *C.W.*, III. 223.

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has been the one great cause of this degradation of the Indian mind. We have paid the penalty; let us do it no more. All such foolish ideas, that Indians must not go out of India, are childish. They must be knocked on the head; the more you go out and travel among the nations of the world the better for you and for your country. If you had done that for hundreds of years past, you would not be here to-day, at the feet of every nation that wants to rule India. The first manifest effect of life is expansion. You must expand if you want to live. The moment you have ceased to expand, death is upon you, danger is ahead. I went to America and Europe, to which you so kindly allude; I had to, because that is the first sign of the revival of national life, expansion. This reviving national life, expanding inside, threw me off, and thousands will be thrown off in that way. Mark my words, it has got to come if this nation lives at all. This expansion, therefore, is the greatest of the signs of the revival of national life, and through this expansion our quota of offering to the general mass of human knowledge, our contribution to the general upheaval of the world, is going out to the external world."[6]

It would appear from what has been said above that the impelling motive or object of Svāmījī's visit to America was not a single, definite, and clearly defined purpose, but may be described as a number of ideas, somewhat vague and inchoate,

[6] *Lectures*, 93-4; *C.W.*, III. 272-3.

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which were working incessantly in his mind. Among these there are clear references to the improvement of the material and spiritual condition of the masses, preaching of Indian religion and philosophy in, and general contact, with the scientific and technical advance of, the West, and last, but not the least, representing Hindu religion in the Parliament of Religions at Chicago. But whatever might have been the motive or motives, Svāmījī's visit to the U.S.A. may be regarded as a godsend not only to his own country but to the world at large. Writing at the fag-end of his life, Svāmījī referred to the three tremendous upheavals in his whole life. The first brought him to Rāmakṛishṇa, the second sent him to the U.S.A., and the third, the last and greatest of all, was his work in India after his return. What Svāmījī meant was expressed poetically in Shakespeare's line, "there's a Divinity that shapes our ends".

2. *Svāmījī and the Parliament of Religions*

Indeed, a man of faith can see protecting divine hands at every stage of Svāmījī's life since his arrival at Chicago in the middle of July, 1893. He learnt with dismay that the Parliament of Religions would meet on 11 September, 1893; that he had not the necessary credentials for a delegate; and that it was too late to register as a delegate to the Parliament even if he had credentials. A more pressing danger was that he had not enough money with him for spending two months at Chicago. He gave up the hope of attending the Parliament

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and proceeded to Boston where living was cheaper. But mysterious are the ways of the Lord. In the train he met a lady who invited him to live at her farm, and introduced him to Professor John Henry Wright of Harvard. Wright was so much impressed by Svāmījī's erudition that he undertook to make all arrangements for Svāmījī's attendance as a delegate at the Parliament of Religions. When Svāmījī pointed out that he had no credentials, Wright said: "To ask you for your credentials is like asking the Sun to state its right to shine". He wrote to the Chairman of the Committee on the selection of delegates that "here is a man who is more learned than all our learned professors put together". He knew Svāmījī was short of funds, and so purchased for him a ticket to Chicago and gave him a letter of introduction to the Chairman of the Committee in charge of accommodation of the delegates. On getting down from the train at Chicago Svāmījī found that he had lost the letter to the Chairman of the Committee for accommodation of delegates, as well as his address. He was again at sea. Hungry and weary, he spent the night inside a packing box at the Railway station. Next morning he walked on, begging for food and asking for the address of the office of Parliament of Religions. But he got neither and sat exhausted on the curbstone or steps of a roadside house. Suddenly a lady in the house on the other side of the street opened a window and was struck by the strange dress and appearance of Svāmījī. She offered him hospitality and herself took him

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to the office of the Parliament of Religions. A veritable series of wonders indeed!

The Parliament opened on 11 September, 1893, at 10 a.m. That day was devoted to addresses of welcome and responses by the delegates. Svāmījī spoke in the afternoon session. It is not true, as is generally supposed, that this was Svāmījī's first address to an American audience. He had spoken in nearly a dozen meetings during the previous two months. But he had never before spoken on such a solemn occasion, nor addressed such a distinguished gathering. The four delegates who preceded him in the afternoon session read prepared speeches. But Svāmījī spoke extempore. When he addressed the audience as "Sisters and Brothers of America", it produced an almost electric effect. According to reports of high officials of the Congress, there arose a peal of applause that lasted for several minutes, and Svāmījī also wrote that "a deafening applause of two minutes followed". This is fully supported by other evidences including eyewitness's account.[7] But it is curious to note that the important daily papers of Chicago, such as the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, do not in the least convey any idea that Svāmījī's speech was in any way unusual or produced any tremendous effect. The *Chicago Daily News* of 12 September, 1893, reproduced many of the speeches on the opening (i.e. preceding) day, but not Vivekānanda's. It merely mentioned that he spoke, and there was no reference to the enthusiastic applause of the

[7] Burke, 57.

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audience.[8] But American papers outside Chicago leave no doubt that Vivekānanda was the most popular or favourite speaker in the Parliament.

In this short opening address[9] Svāmījī stressed the spirit of toleration which distinguished Hinduism throughout the ages. "We believe", said he, "not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true". In support of this he quoted the following lines from a hymn "which is everyday repeated by millions of human beings" (in India):

"As the different streams having their sources in different places all mingle their water in the sea, so, O Lord, the different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee."

He regarded the Parliament as a "vindication, a declaration to the world of the wonderful doctrine preached in the *Gītā*", and quoted the following verse: "Whosoever comes to Me, through whatsoever form, I reach him; all men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to Me". He lamented that "sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful earth and drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilisation and sent whole nations to despair". But he hoped that the Parliament of Religions would put an end to them.

[8] The old files of these two dailies of Chicago were consulted by me while I was in that city in 1958.

[9] For the texts of Svāmījī's Addresses in the Parliament of Religions, cf. *C.W.*, I. 3-24.

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Svāmījī spoke for the second time on 15 September. It was also a brief address in which he told the story of a 'frog in the well' meeting a 'frog from the sea'. The former could not be convinced by the latter that the sea was bigger than the well, and proudly proclaimed, "nothing can be bigger than my well". After narrating the story Svāmījī drew the obvious moral, namely, that the Hindu, the Christian, the Muhammadan, each sits in his little well and thinks that is the whole world. He thanked America for making an attempt to break down the barriers of this little world of ours.

The most important address of Svāmījī was that on 'Hinduism' on 19 September. It was a written paper in which he expounded the general principles of Hinduism, laying particular stress on its catholicity and very comprehensive nature. It contains the essence of the teachings of Vedānta which Svāmījī propagated throughout his life, and will be discussed in some details later in connection with his religious views. But although this lecture of Svāmījī is fairly well-known, a few extempore remarks, which he made before reading his paper, are not known in this country, and are not included even in his most recent biography. I read them in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* of 20 September, 1893, and as they seem to be of great importance, and hold out before us an aspect of Svāmījī not otherwise known, I reproduce the whole passage which was published under the caption "Hindoo criticizes Christianity". It runs thus: "Dr. Noble then presented Swami Vivekananda,

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Photostat copy of an extract from the speech of Svāamī Vivekānanda published in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* on 20 Sept. 1898.

Says Christianity Is Intolerant.

Dr. Noble then presented Swami Vivekananda, the Hindoo monk, who was applauded loudly as he stepped forward to the center of the platform. He wore an orange robe, bound with a scarlet sash, and a pale yellow turban. The customary smile was on his handsome face and his eyes shown with animation. Said he:

We who come from the East have sat here on the platform day after day and have been told in a patronizing way that we ought to accept Christianity because Christian nations are the most prosperous. We look about us and we see England, the most prosperous Christian nation in the world, with her foot on the neck of 250,000,000 of Asiatics. We look back into history and see that the prosperity of Christian Europe began with Spain. Spain's prosperity began with the invasion of Mexico. Christianity wins its prosperity by cutting the throats of its fellowmen. At such a price the Hindoo will not have prosperity.

I have sat here today and I have heard the height of intolerance. I have heard the creed of the Moslem applauded, when today the Moslem sword is carrying destruction into India. Blood and the sword are not for the Hinda, whose religion is based on the law of love.

When the applause had ceased Mr. Vivekananda went to read his paper, a summary of which follows:

Three religions stand now in the world which have come down to us from time prehistoric—Hindooism, Zoroastrianism, and Judaism. They have all received tremendous shocks and all of them proved by their survival their internal

[*For details refer to page* 42.

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the Hindoo monk, who was applauded loudly as he stepped forward to the center of the platform. He wore an orange robe, bound with a scarlet sash, and a pale yellow turban. The customary smile was on his handsome face and his eyes shown (sic) with animation. Said he: We who come from the East have sat here on the platform day after day and have been told in a patronizing way that we ought to accept Christianity because Christian nations are the most prosperous. We look about us and we see England, the most prosperous Christian nation in the world, with her foot on the neck of 250,000,000 Asiatics. We look back into history and see that the prosperity of Christian Europe began with Spain. Spain's prosperity began with the invasion of Mexico. Christianity wins its prosperity by cutting the throats of its fellow-men. At such a price the Hindoo will not have prosperity. I have sat here today and I have heard the height of intolerance. I have heard the creed of the Moslem applauded, when today the Moslem sword is carrying destruction into India. Blood and sword are not for the Hindoo, whose religion is based on the laws of love".[10]

On 20 September Svāmījī spoke for the fourth time, the theme of his address being 'Religion not the Crying Need of India'. It was a very short speech in course of which Svāmījī said: "You Christians, who are so fond of sending out mission-

[10] I quote this from the original. A part of it has been reproduced in Burke, p. 75.

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aries to save the soul of the heathen, why do you not try to save their bodies from starvation? In India, during the terrible famines, thousands died from hunger, yet you Christians did nothing. You erect churches all through India, but the crying evil in the East is not religion—they have religion enough—but it is bread that the suffering millions of burning India cry out for with parched throats. They ask us for bread, but we give them stones. It is an insult to a starving people to offer them religion; it is an insult to a starving man to teach him metaphysics. In India a priest that preached for money would lose caste, and be spat upon by the people. I came here to seek aid for my impoverished people, and I fully realised how difficult it was to get help for heathens from Christians in a Christian land".[11] Svāmījī continued: "Christian missionaries come and offer life, but only on condition that the Hindus become Christians, abandoning the faith of their fathers and forefathers. Is it right? If you wish to illustrate the meaning of 'brotherhood', treat the Hindu more kindly, even though he be a Hindu and is faithful to his religion. Send missionaries to them to teach them how better to earn a piece of bread, and not teach them metaphysical nonsense". These words created a great sensation, and reference may be made to a specimen of adverse criticism not very well-known in this country. Professor

[11] This is the full text of the Address as given in *C.W.*, I. 20. The lines that follow within quotation are given as part of the Address in the *Christian Herald* of 11 October, 1893. Cf. Burke, p. 79.

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Gaston Bonet-maury, Professor in the Faculty of Protestant Theology, the only French delegate in the Parliament, condemned in his book the grave accusations made by the Indian monk Vivekānanda against the Christian missionaries. It was, he said, unjust because it is known all over the world how the British Government and British Christian Missions in India vied with each other in their zeal to help the people during famines.[12] On the other hand, Bishop Keane, Catholic Prelate, Baltimore, speaking on 21 September in the Parliament, observed on the same speech of Vivekānanda: "I endorse the denunciation that was hurled forth last night against the system of pretended charity that offered food to the hungry Hindus at the cost of their conscience and their faith. It is a shame and a disgrace to those who call themselves Christians. If by these criticisms Vivekānanda can only stir us and sting us into better teachings and better doings in the great work of Christ in the world, I for one will be profoundly grateful to our friend, the great Hindu monk".[13] The *New York Herald* also editorially remarked about Svāmījī: "After hearing him we feel how foolish it is to send missionaries to this learned nation".[14]

Svāmījī spoke altogether five times in the plenary session of the Parliament of Religions. The

[12] I am indebted for this reference to Mr. R. M. Campbell, a student of the Chicago University.

[13] Mr. Campbell also drew my attention to this which is partly reproduced in Burke, p. 79.

[14] Nikhilananda, 64.

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general view that he spoke six times is perhaps not correct, as his lecture on 'Buddhism, the Fulfilment of Hinduism' was probably given, not before the Parliament itself, but its Scientific Section, where Svāmījī spoke on several other occasions.[15] He gave his final address on 27 September, in course of which he said: "Much has been said of the common ground of religious unity. I am not going just now to venture my own theory. But if any one here hopes that this unity will come by the triumph of any one of the religions and the destruction of the others, to him I say, 'Brother, yours is an impossible hope'. Do I wish that the Christian would become Hindu? God forbid. Do I wish that the Hindu or Buddhist would become Christian? God forbid. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth.

"If the Parliament of Religions has shown anything to the world it is this: It has proved to the world that holiness, purity, and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world, and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character. In the face of this evidence, if anybody dreams of the exclusive

[15] Unfortunately, none of these speeches have been preserved. Only the following passage from Svāmījī's discourse on the "Earlier Forms of Hinduism" was published in the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 23 September, 1893: "Tell your missionaries to go about from house to house in a humble garb; tell them to preach gentleness and mildness, and to practise what they preach. Tell them to preach Christianity, but tell them not to teach that in order to be a Christian it is necessary to be a carnivore".

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survival of his own religion and the destruction of the others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart, and point out to him that upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in spite of resistance: "Help and not Fight", "Assimilation and not Destruction", "Harmony and Peace and not Dissension".

These sentiments were not, however, much appreciated by the members of the Parliament. Its President, Rev. J. H. Barrows, observed: "Swami Vivekananda was always heard with interest by the Parliament, but very little approval was shown to some of the sentiments expressed in his closing address".[16] But the public reaction was more favourable.[17]

Svāmījī's addresses have been quoted at some length because they give a very clear picture of his conception of Hinduism. That Svāmījī created a very favourable opinion about Hinduism by these speeches in the Parliament admits of no doubt. It may be said that he put Hinduism in the map of the world of culture. There is equally little doubt that he "exercised a wonderful influence over his auditors",[18] as Barrows remarked, and that a section of American people began to feel great enthusiasm for Vedāntic doctrine.[19] The two

[16] Barrows—2, Vol. I, p. 171.

[17] Burke, pp. 83-6. Cf. the following comment in the *Critic* of 7 October, 1893: "No one expressed so well the spirit of the Parliament, its limitations and its finest influence, as did the Hindoo monk." (Ibid., 85).

[18] Nikhilananda, 64.

[19] This will be evident from Svāmījī's activities in U.S.A. discussed in the next chapter.

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following extracts may be regarded as a fair assessment of the role played by Svāmījī in the Parliament of Religions:

"The immediate results of the Parliament were mixed. Perhaps it is correct to say that the bigots became more bigoted, for their backs had been pressed to the wall, and that the liberal-minded became more liberal, for they were now confirmed in their views, and that this latter outcome was undoubtedly the more important and enduring. It is undeniable, moreover, that the American people had not been merely intellectually impressed by the nobility and supreme wisdom of Eastern doctrines which hitherto, in the words of Dr. Alfred Momerie, 'they had been taught to regard with contempt', but that they had been touched by and had responded to the tremendous power of living spirituality that Swamiji embodied. Something far more important and more far-reaching had taken place than an intellectual appreciation of Eastern religions. It was as though the soul of America had long asked for spiritual sustenance and had now been answered".[20]

Commenting on the final address of Svāmījī, the *Critic* of 7 October, 1893, observed:

"Perhaps the most tangible result of the Congress was the feeling it aroused in regard to foreign missions. The impertinence of sending half-educated theological students to instruct the wise and erudite Orientals was never brought home to

[20] Burke, 83.

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an English-speaking audience more forcibly. It is only in the spirit of tolerance and sympathy that we are at liberty to touch their faith, and the exhorters who possess these qualities are rare".[21]

That Svāmījī contributed more than anyone else to these achievements would be hardly questioned by anybody. It would be, however, a mistake to think that he won over any substantial section of the delegates to his own view of Hinduism. There is also no doubt that a section of the Christian missionaries severely attacked him, and many of them abused Hinduism in the traditional way very familiar to us, Indians.

Nevertheless, it cannot be gainsaid that the Parliament of Religions made Vivekānanda a great world figure. Of him it could be truly said that he awoke one morning and found himself famous. Almost overnight he leapt from obscurity to fame and renown. His life-size portraits were placed on the road-side in Chicago with his name written beneath it, and many showed reverence to it with bowed heads.[22] Eminent persons and leading newspapers outside Chicago referred to him in the most flattering terms. Two specimens may be quoted:

The *New York Herald* said: "He is undoubtedly the greatest figure in the Parliament of Religions."[23] The *Boston Evening Post* said: "He is a great favourite at the Parliament from the grandeur of his sentiments and his appearance as well. If he merely crosses the platform he is

[21] ibid., 85. [22] Nikhilananda, 62. [23] Ibid., 64.

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applauded; and this marked approval of thousands he accepts in a childlike spirit of gratification without a trace of conceit. ... At the Parliament of Religions they used to keep Vivekananda until the end of the programme to make people stay till the end of the session. ... The four thousand fanning people in the Hall of Columbus would sit smiling and expectant, waiting for an hour or two to listen to Vivekananda for fifteen minutes. The chairman knew the old rule of keeping the best until the last".[24]

3. *Svāmījī in the U.S.A.*

The new status of Svāmījī was clearly manifested in two ways. He was no longer worried by his financial difficulty, for many wealthy Americans invited him to their houses and entertained him with lavish hospitality. Secondly, he was invited by a lecture bureau to tour the United States. He accepted the invitation as it gave him a golden opportunity to propagate his views over the whole of the U.S.A. and remove the general misconceptions about Hindu religion. "He visited, among other places, Iowa City, Des Moines, St. Louis, Indianapolis, Minneapolis, Detroit, Buffalo, Hartford, Boston, Cambridge, New York, Baltimore and Washington".[25] Many Christian ministers showed a warm appreciation by inviting him to speak in their churches. But he was a very outspoken man and sometimes bitterly attacked what he regarded as false Christianity. As a specimen we may

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid., 65.

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quote the following passage from his speech at Detroit: "You train and educate and clothe and pay men to do what?—to come over to my country and curse and abuse all my forefathers, my religion, my everything. They walk near temple and say, 'You idolaters, you will go to hell'. But the Hindu is mild; he smiles and passes on, saying 'Let the fools talk'. And then you who train men to abuse and criticize, if I just touch you with the least bit of criticism, but with the kindest purpose, you shrink and cry: 'Do not touch us. We are Americans; we criticize, curse, and abuse all the heathens of the world, but do not touch us, we are sensitive plants'. And whenever your missionaries criticize us, let them remember this: if all India stands up and takes all the mud that lies at the bottom of the Indian Ocean and throws it up against the Western countries, it will not be doing an infinitesimal part of what you are doing to us. ... If you want to live, go back to Christ. You are not Christians. No, as a nation you are not. Go back to Christ. Go back to him who had nowhere to lay his head. Yours is a religion preached in the name of luxury. What an irony of fate! Reverse this if you want to live, reverse this. You cannot serve God and Mammon at the same time".[26] These "outspoken words aroused the bitter enmity of a large section of the Christian missionaries and their American patrons, and also of Christian fanatics. Filled with rancour and hatred, these began to vilify him both openly and in private.

[26] Ibid., 66.

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They tried to injure his reputation by writing false stories traducing his character. Some of the Indian delegates to the Parliament, jealous of the Swami's popularity and fame, joined in the vilification. Missionaries working in India and some of the Hindu organizations started an infamous campaign against the Swami's work. The Theosophists were particularly vindictive. They declared that the Swami was violating the laws of monastic life in America by eating forbidden food and breaking caste laws".[27]

But there was also the other side of the picture. The *Iowa State Register* wrote that "Vivekananda and his cause found a place in the hearts of all true Christians".[28] There was undoubtedly a section of Americans, though small in number, who sincerely appreciated the message of Vivekānanda. A knowledge of this perhaps encouraged Svāmījī to change his plan and programme. He was tired of addressing day after day motley crowds most of whom were indifferent and ignorant. In a letter, dated 15 March, 1894, to the Hale sisters he wrote: "I do not care for lecturing any more. It is too disgusting to bring me to suit anybody's or any audience's fad .... I will tell you what is to my taste. I cannot write—cannot speak—but I can think deep, and when I am heated can speak fire. But it should be to a select few—a very select few. And let them carry and sow my ideas broadcast if they will—not I. My idea of doing good is this—

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid., 65.

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to evolve a few giants, and not to strew pearls to the swine and lose time, breath, and energy".[29]

Svāmījī's desire was fulfilled in a strange way. Dr. Lewis James invited him to give a series of lectures on the Hindu religion before the Brooklyn Ethical Association. "On the evening of December 31, 1894, he gave his first lecture, and according to the report of the *Brooklyn Standard,* the enthusiastic audience, consisting of doctors and lawyers and judges and teachers, remained spell-bound by his eloquent defence of the religion of India. They all acknowledged that Vivekananda was even greater than his fame. At the end of the meeting they made an insistent demand for regular classes in Brooklyn, to which the Swami agreed. A series of class meetings was held and several public lectures were given at the Pouch Mansion, where the Ethical Association held its meetings. These lectures constituted the beginning of the permanent work in America which the Swami secretly desired.

"Soon after, several poor but earnest students rented for the Swami some unfurnished rooms in a poor section of New York City. He lived in one of them. An ordinary room on the second floor of the lodging-house was used for the lectures and classes. The Swami when conducting the meetings sat on the floor, while the ever more numerous auditors seated themselves as best they could, utilizing the marble-topped dresser, the arms of the sofa, and even the corner wash-stand.

[29] Ibid., 73.

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The door was left open and the overflow filled the hall and sat on the stairs. The Swami, like a typical religious teacher in India, felt himself in his own element. The students, forgetting all the inconveniences, hung upon every word uttered from the teacher's deep personal experiences or his wide range of knowledge.

"The lectures, given every morning and several evenings a week, were free. The rent was paid by the voluntary subscription of the students, and the deficit was met by the Swami himself, through the money he earned by giving secular lectures on India. Soon the meeting-place had to be removed downstairs to occupy an entire parlour floor.

"He began to instruct several chosen disciples in Jñāna-yoga in order to clarify their intellects regarding the subtle truths of Vedānta, and also in Rāja-yoga to teach them the science of self-control, concentration, and meditation. He was immensely happy with the result of his concentrated work. He enjoined upon these students to follow strict disciplines regarding food, choosing only the simplest. The necessity of chastity was emphasized, and they were warned against psychic and occult powers. At the same time he broadened their intellectual horizon through the teachings of Vedāntic universality".[30]

Some time about June, 1895, the lectures on Rāja-yoga, based on Patañjali's aphorisms, were published in the form of a book which attracted the attention of many American philosophers and

[30] Ibid., 78-9.

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excited enthusiasm even of Tolstoy. But all these works proved a great strain on Svāmījī and he badly needed rest. One of his students in New York, Miss Elizabeth Dutcher, invited him to take rest in her summer cottage at Thousand Island Park in an island of the St. Lawrence River. Being situated on a hill, sloping down to the river, and commanding a view of many distant islands, the cottage proved an ideal retreat for Svāmījī. But Svāmījī did not remain inactive there. A group of intimate students, ten to twelve in number, gathered there, and after evening meal Svāmījī used to talk to them for two hours or even longer. These informal religious discourses "revealed brilliant flashes of illumination, lofty flights of eloquence and outpourings of the most profound wisdom".[31] Some of these talks were noted down by one of his disciples, Miss S. Ellen Waldo, and published under the title *'Inspired Talks'*. One day, after hearing Miss Waldo read the notes to some other disciples, Svāmījī asked her: "How could you have caught my thought and words so perfectly? It was as if I heard myself speaking". The discourses were regularly given for seven weeks, and his disciples, all of whom except one were older than him, were simply enraptured and showed profound respect to him. "Some marvelled at his purity, some at his power, some at his intellectuality, some at his serenity, which was like the depths of the ocean, unperturbed by the waves of applause or contumely". "Two students

[31] Ibid., 80.

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arrived at the Park one dark and rainy night. One of them said, 'We have come to you as we would go to Jesus if he were still on the earth and ask him to teach us."[32] Professor Wright of Harvard, mentioned above, was one of these disciples. "He became so absorbed in the class talks that at the end of every discourse the tense professor would invariably ask the teacher: 'Well, Swami, it all amounts to this in the end, doesn't it ?—I am Brahman, I am the Absolute'. The Swami would smile indulgently and answer gently, 'Yes, Dockie, you are Brahman, you are the absolute, in the real essence of your being."[33]

4. *Svāmījī in London*

Svāmījī left the Thousand Island Park on 7 August, 1895, and a few days later sailed from New York to London. Here, too, he delivered a few public lectures and held regular classes which attracted a gradually increasing number of students till there was no longer accommodation in the hall. Some newspapers compared him with Rammohan Roy and Keshabchandra Sen, and even with Buddha. Even heads of some Churches welcomed him; Svāmījī was also invited to give discourse in the drawing rooms of fashionable ladies. It was in one of these select gatherings that he first met Miss Margaret E. Noble, who afterwards became one of his most notable disciples. Svāmījī gave her the name Niveditā (the Dedicated) and never was a name more justified

[32] Ibid., 84.

[33] Ibid., 85-6.

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by action. For, Sister Nivedita, as she was known in India, devoted many years of her life to the noble cause of the uplift of women and other social works. While at London, Svāmījī took up the translation of the *Bhakti* aphorisms of Nārada with the help of an Englishman. Although Svāmījī stayed less than three months in London, he was pleased with his reception by the press and public in London and progress of the work.

5. *Foundation of the Vedānta Society*

Svāmījī made some arrangements for continuing his work in London and returned to New York on 6 December, 1895. There he gave a series of talks on work as spiritual discipline which were later published as *Karma-yoga*. He also gave a series of public lectures on love as a spiritual discipline which were later published as *Bhakti-yoga*. At Detroit he gave lectures and held classes on the same subject.

The appreciation, popularity and sincere devotion which Svāmījī found in abundance in America led him to think of setting up a permanent organization for teaching the fundamental principles of Hinduism on a rational and scientific basis in order that their value may be appreciated by the learned thinkers of the world. The result was the foundation of the Vedānta Society of New York in February, 1896. It marks the beginning of that systematic and organized preaching of Hinduism in America which is one of the most outstanding achievements of Svāmījī. Svāmījī's reputation

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was now establishtd on a sound basis even in learned circles in America. The Harvard University, the biggest and most famous in the U.S.A., invited him to deliver a lecture on the philosophy of Vedānta to its Graduate Students of the Department of Philosophy. This lecture, delivered on 25 March, 1896, created such an impression that he was offered the Chair of Eastern Philosophy in the University. He declined this as well as a similar offer from the Columbia University, on the ground that he was a *sannyāsin*.

6. *Second visit to London*

Svāmījī now received earnest appeals from London to return and resume his activities. He left for London on 15 April, 1896, and resumed his work with feverish activity. "From the beginning of May he conducted five classes a week and a Friday session for open discussion. He gave a series of three Sunday lectures in one of the galleries of the Royal Institute of Painters in Water-Colours, in Piccadilly, and also lectured at Princes' Hall and the Lodge of Annie Besant, in addition to speaking at many clubs, and in educational institutions and drawing-rooms. His audience consisted mostly of intellectual and serious-minded people. His speeches on Jñāna-yoga, containing the essence of the Vedānta philosophy, were mostly given in England. Canon Wilberforce held a reception in the Swami's honour, to which he invited many distinguished people."[34]

[34] Ibid., 99.

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The renowned orientalist, Max Müller, also invited Svāmījī to lunch with him in Oxford. Max Müller had already been deeply impressed by the life and teachings of Śrī Rāmakṛishṇa and was eager to meet his great disciple. Müller had already written an article about Rāmakṛishṇa in the well-known journal, the *Nineteenth Century*, and proposed to write a full biography if he could secure enough materials for the purpose. Svāmījī asked his brother-monk Sāradānanda, who had arrived in London at his request, to prepare these materials. On the basis of these and his personal talks with Vivekānanda, Max Müller wrote his famous book, *Rāmakṛishṇa: His life and sayings*, which spread the name and fame of that great saint all over Europe.

As in America, so in England, a number of Englishmen became very much devoted to Svāmījī and some of them came to India and helped in his work. Chief among these, besides Miss Noble mentioned above, were Captain Sevier and his wife who accepted Svāmījī as *Guru*, but loved him as their son.

During all these feverish activities in the U.S.A. and England Svāmījī kept himself in constant touch with his fellow-monks and devotees in all parts of India. They had been begging him for a long time to return to India. But before doing so, Svāmījī was so exhausted in body that on the advice of his three intimate disciples, Mr. and Mrs. Sevier and Henrietta Muller, and with their help, he made a holiday tour in Switzerland and Germany in July-

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August, 1891, and very much enjoyed and profited by his walks in the Alps. He received an invitation from the renowned Sanskrit scholar, Paul Deussen, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Kiel, Germany. After discussions on Vedānta with Svāmījī the Professor said: "It seems that a movement is being made back towards the fountain-head of spirituality, a movement that will, in the future, probably make India the spiritual leader of the nations, the highest and greatest spiritual influence on earth."[35] As due to urgent calls from London Svāmījī could not stay at Kiel, Professor Deussen accompanied him to London, and held many discussions on Vedānta.

Svāmījī spent two months more in England, making contact with men who were eminent in different spheres of life. He had already sent Svāmī Sāradānanda to New York along with Mr. Goodwin, in June, 1896. The report of his success in carrying on the work there gratified Svāmījī. Svāmī Abhedānanda also arrived from India and his maiden speech in Bloomsbury Square, London, assured Svāmījī that his work in England could be safely left in his hands. Svāmījī now made arrangements to start for India. Mr. and Mrs. Sevier decided to accompany him to lead a life of *Vānaprastha* (ascetic retirement) in India. They disposed of all that they possessed and placed the sale-proceeds at the disposal of Svāmījī.

On the eve of Svāmījī's departure his friends and followers organized a farewell meeting and presented

[35] *Cent. Vol.*, 112-3.

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an address to him. Svāmījī and the Sevier couple left England on 16 December, 1896, and proceeded overland by railway train to Naples where they got on board a steamer bound for Ceylon.

Before we conclude this chapter of Svāmījī's life, it is worth noting the impression created by him on Englishmen. There are many testimonies to prove that his religious views created a deep impression on many minds. Thus referring to his last lecture in London a correspondent from London wrote to the *Indian Mirror* on 14 December, 1896: "The last lecture on the Advaita philosophy was given by the Swami Vivekananda to a crowded audience, which was anxious not to lose this last opportunity of hearing him for some time to come, on December, 10, 1896. The regularity with which these thoughtful people have attended the Swami's lectures in London is an indication of the serious attention which they have given to the whole of the present Vedānta exposition—an exposition which, in the hands of a personality which many have learned to very deeply respect and others to love, finds an application to every phase of Western life, as well as to that of Eastern life, where its first presentment was made. It is this liberal and wise interpretation, which has brought people of many varying shades of opinion, including several of the clergy of the Church of England, to group themselves together in an effort to make the Swami's teaching as widely known as possible.

"A deep spiritual teaching is not likely to move

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rapidly at first, but steadily the Eastern thought is being more and more understood through an army of conscientious and industrious translators, and a teacher like the Swami Vivekananda comes and gives a living force to this lore."[36]

Miss Noble thus describes her first feelings which later made her a disciple of Svāmījī under the name, Niveditā.

"To not a few of us the words of Swami Vivekananda came as living water to men perishing of thirst. Many of us have been conscious for years past of that growing uncertainty and despair, with regard to Religion, which has beset the intellectual life of Europe for half a century. Belief in the dogmas of Christianity has become impossible to us, and we had no tool, such as we now hold, by which to cut away the doctrinal shell from the kernel of Reality, in our faith. To these, the Vedānta has given intellectual confirmation and philosophical expression of their own mistrusted intuitions. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light....

"It was the Swami's '*I am God*' that came as something always known, only never said before ..... yet again, it was the Unity of Man, that was the touch needed to rationalise all previous experiences and give logical sanction to the thirst for absolute service never boldly avowed in the past. Some by one gate, and some by another, we have all entered into a great heritage and we know it. ...."[37]

[36] Disciples, 439. [37] Ibid., 440.

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Lastly, we may quote the views expressed in 1898 by B. C. Pal, then a strong pillar of the Brāhma Samāj and later destined to attain fame as a great national leader:

"Some people in India think that very little fruit has come of the lectures that Swami Vivekananda delivered in England, and that his friends and admirers exaggerate his work. But on coming here I see that he has exerted a marked influence everywhere. In many parts of England I have met with men who deeply regard and venerate Vivekananda. Though I do not belong to his sect, and though it is true that I have differences of opinion with him, I must say that Vivekananda has opened the eyes of a great many here and broadened their hearts. Owing to his teaching, most people here now believe firmly that wonderful spiritual truths lie hidden in the ancient Hindu scriptures. Not only has he brought about this feeling, but he has succeeded in establishing a golden relation between England and India. From what I quoted on 'Vivekanandism' from *The Dead Pulpit* by Mr. Haweis, you have clearly understood that, owing to the spread of Vivekananda's doctrines, many hundreds of people have seceded from Christianity. And how deep and extensive his work has been in this country will readily appear from the following incident. Yesterday evening I was going to visit a friend in the southern part of London; I lost my way and was looking from the corner of a street thinking in which direction I should go, when a lady

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accompanied by a boy came to me, with the intention, it seemed, of showing me the way . . . She said to me, 'Sir, perhaps you are looking to find your way. May I help you?' . . . She showed me my way and said, 'From certain papers I learned that you were coming to London. At the very first sight of you I was telling my son, 'Look, there is the Swami Vivekananda.' As I had to catch the train in a hurry I had no time to tell her that I was not Vivekananda, and was compelled to go off speedily. However, I was really surprised to see that the lady possessed such veneration for Vivekananda, even before she knew him personally. I felt highly gratified at the agreeable incident, and thanked my *Gerua* turban which had given me so much honour. Besides the incident, I have seen here many educated English gentlemen who have come to revere India and who listen eagerly to any religious or spiritual truths, if they belong to India."[38]

[38] Ibid., 441.

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Chapter Three

SVĀMĪ VIVEKĀNANDA IN INDIA

1. *Reception in India*

On 15 January, 1897, the ship which carried Svāmījī touched Colombo. He received a tumultuous ovation from the Indians such as an emperor or a victorious general might envy. A mighty shout from the vast crowd that gathered at the harbour signalled his arrival. As the huge procession slowly passed through triumphal arches, thousands flung themselves upon the ground to touch his feet. The same scene was repeated at about a dozen places in South India which he visited on his way to Madras. The reception was particularly touching at Ramnad, whose ruler had encouraged and helped him to go to America. The horses were unyoked from the carriage of Svāmījī, and it was drawn by the people, including the Rājā himself. Enthusiasm naturally rose to the highest peak at Madras, for it was there that the idea of Svāmījī's visit to America was seriously taken up by a band of young men, and subscriptions collected for the purpose. It is hardly necessary to add that Calcutta, the city of his birth, where he arrived on 20 February, 1897, gave him a rousing reception. The thing of permanent value in all this is the series of welcome addresses presented to Svāmījī and his replies, sometimes followed by lectures, at different places. The

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addresses show the reaction of Svāmījī's teachings and achievements in the West upon the people of India, and Svāmījī's speeches give a very clear outline of his thoughts and ideas on the various problems of India and the practical steps he proposed to take in solving them.

2. *New Monastic Order*

Though overwhelmed by public applause and numerous functions and interviews, the monastic order which Svāmījī had set up after the passing away of the Master occupied his chief attention. The *Maṭh* (Monastery) had been removed from Baranagar to Alambazar in 1892, and after the hectic day Svāmījī repaired there each night to join his brother-monks. The central idea in his mind was to carry into practice what he had so long preached, by making the monks devote themselves to an active life of service for the masses and thus to make the monastic organization a potent instrument for social and national regeneration, by spreading education among the illiterate, helping them fight against poverty and disease, removing the social evils and iniquities, and raising them to a higher level of morality. These were, no doubt, noble humanitarian works, but meant a revolutionary departure from the time-old monastic practice in India. Svāmījī knew this, but as far back as 1895, he had felt the need of such a band of fiery missionaries who, by doing the work in a religious spirit, would set examples to the youths of India. There were, however, voices

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of dissent. The dissenting monks "were individualists, eager for their personal salvation. They wanted to practise austerities and penances, enjoy peaceful meditation, and lead a quiet life of detachment from the world. To them God was first, and the world came next. At least that was the way they had understood Śrī Rāmakṛishṇa's teachings. These young monks thought that for one who had taken the monastic vows, the world was *māyā;* therefore all activities, including the charitable and philanthropic, ultimately entangled one in worldly life. ... To his brother-disciples, therefore, he pointed out that the idea of personal liberation was unworthy of those who called themselves disciples of Rāmakṛishṇa, an Incarnation of God. The very fact that they had received the grace of a Saviour should have convinced them of their sure salvation. Their duty, he emphasized, was to serve others as the visible manifestations of God. He said that he wanted to create a new band of monks, who would take not only the traditional vow of personal salvation, but also a new vow of service to humanity."[1] Ultimately Svāmījī's views prevailed. The brother-monks accepted the twin ideals of personal salvation by meditation and the active service for the masses.

Svāmījī now proceeded to set up a regular organization to carry on the work he had in view. The idea was broached by Svāmījī in a representative meeting of the monks and lay devotees on 1 May, 1897. He was convinced, he said, by what he saw

[1] Nikhilananda, 123.

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in America that the lack of organization was a serious defect in the Hindu society. He also cited the example of Buddhist organization which spread that religion all over the world. He therefore asked for the co-operation of all "in order to organize the educational, philanthropic, and religious activities which he had already inaugurated but which had hitherto been carried out in an unsystematic way." Svāmījī then added his own view of administering the Mission. He "declared that in a country like India, in its then current state of development, it would not be wise to form an organization on a democratic basis, where each member had an equal voice and decisions were made according to the vote of the majority. Democratic principles could be followed later, when, with the spread of education, people would learn to sacrifice individual interests and personal prejudices for the public weal. Therefore, said the Swami, the organization for the time being should be under the leadership of a 'dictator,' whose authority everybody must obey. In the fullness of time, it would come to be guided by the opinion and consent of others. Moreover, he himself was only acting in the capacity of a servant of the common Master, as were they all."[2] The meeting unanimously approved of Svāmījī's proposal and laid down the following aims and objects in another meeting held on 5 May.

"The Association (Sangha) shall be known as the Rāmakrishna Mission.

[2] Ibid., 125-6.

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"The aim of the Sangha is to preach those truths which Shri Rāmakrishna has, for the good of humanity, preached and demonstrated by practical application in his own life, and to help others to put these truths into practice in their lives for their temporal, mental and spiritual advancement.

"The duty of the Mission is to conduct in the right spirit the activities of the movement inaugurated by Shri Rāmakrishna for the establishment of fellowship among the followers of different religions, knowing them all to be so many forms only of one undying Eternal Religion.

"Its Methods of Action are:

"(*a*) To train men so as to make them competent to teach such knowledge or sciences as are conducive to the material and spiritual welfare of the masses:

"(*b*) to provide and encourage arts and industries: and

"(*c*) to introduce and spread among the people in general Vedāntic and other religious ideas in the way in which they were elucidated in the life of Shri Rāmakrishna.

"Indian Work Department:

"The activities of the Mission should be directed to the establishment of Maths and Āshramas in different parts of India for the training of Sannyāsins and such of the householders as may be willing to devote their lives to educate others, and to the finding of the

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means by which they would be enabled to educate the people, by going about from one province to another.

"Its work in the Foreign Department should be to send trained members of the Order to countries outside India to bring about a closer relation and better understanding between India and foreign countries.

"The aims and ideals of the Mission being purely spiritual and humanitarian, it shall have no connection with politics.

"Any one who believes in the mission of Shri Rāmakrishna, or who sympathises or is willing to co-operate with the above-mentioned aims and objects of the Association, is eligible for membership".[3]

The next important event was the transfer of the *Maṭh* from Alambazar to its present site at Belur with spacious grounds. The new *Maṭh* was consecrated with due ceremony on 9 December, 1898, though it was not actually occupied till three weeks later, on 2 January, 1899. The Belur *Maṭh* took the place of the original *Maṭh* situated successively at Baranagar and Alambazar, and was a purely monastic organization. But an elaborate set of rules was drawn up for it by Svāmījī himself. These rules provide for disciplined life and spiritual practices, and emphasize the need of strength of character, self-reliance. and faith in the *Guru*. But the missionary acti-

[3] Gambhirananda, 1·19-20.

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vity is not only sanctioned but also stressed upon as the two following rules would show :

"This Math is established to work out one's own liberation, and to train oneself to do good to the world in every way, along the lines laid down by Bhagavān Shri Rāmakrishna. For the women too there will be started a similar Math.

"The root of all misery in India is the wide gulf between the lower and upper classes. Unless this difference is made up, there is no hope of any well-being for the people. Therefore we must send preachers to all places to give the masses education and religious teaching."[4]

The Belur *Maṭh* was handed over to a Board of Trustees, all drawn from the monks of the Order. It was declared to be the chief *Maṭh*; all the other *Maṭhs* of the Rāmakṛishṇa Order of Monks had to abide by its rules.

3. *Ideal of Service*

Of Svāmījī's personal activities during his stay in India for less than five years a few significant ones may be briefly noticed. When plague broke out in Calcutta in April, 1898, and the remedial measures adopted by the Government were highly unsatisfactory, and even led to popular outbreaks, Svāmījī came down from Darjeeling, where he had gone to recoup his health, and organized various preventive measures. When others remonstrated,

[4] Ibid., 135-7.

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saying, "Swamiji, where will the funds come from?" he thundered back, "Why, we shall sell the newly purchased *Maṭh* grounds, if necessary."[5] Fortunately this was not necessary. When plague again broke out next year, the Rāmakrishna Mission undertook relief work under the leadership of Svāmī Sadānanda, assisted by Sister Niveditā and others. About Sister Niveditā's part in the work, we have it on the authority of the great historian, Sir Jadunath Sarkar, an eye-witness, "that when the sweepers had fled away, he chanced upon a white woman one day clearing the streets with broom and basket in hand. This was none other than Niveditā, whose courage and sense of civic duty spurred the local youths to take up the cleansing of the lanes and streets, following her example, and make their quarters free from the threat of the pestilence."[6]

Svāmī Sadānanda also set up an unprecedented example. "If the stench of garbage accumulated in a narrow lane repelled even the practised sweepers, he would non-chalantly snatch the basket and spade from one of them and set about removing the decomposed heap till the sweepers too would step forward to help him. At the end, he would congratulate them and embrace them warmly, regardless of their social distance and dirty bodies. Or if there was an uncared-for patient, he would hug him and nurse him to recovery."[7] This incident brings out in bold relief the ideal of service enunciated by Svāmījī and the

[5] Ibid., 127. [6] Ibid., 131-2. [7] Ibid., 132.

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new spirit he infused among the monks of the Rāmakrishna Mission. Some brother-disciples of Svāmījī were also infused with his spirit. "One of them, Akhaṇḍānanda, fed and nursed the sufferers from famine at Murshidabad, in Bengal; another, Triguṇātītānanda, in 1897 opened a famine-relief centre at Dinajpur. Other centres were established at Deoghar, Dakshineswar, and Calcutta."[8] Svāmījī was delighted at the progress of the work.

Svāmījī also started two journals as chief organs of the Mission. An English journal, *Prabuddha Bhārata* (Awakened India) was started in Madras in July, 1896, but stopped publication on the death of its young editor in May, 1898. Svāmījī then asked Mr. Sevier, mentioned above, to take charge of it and it was re-issued in August, 1898, from Almora. Finally it was removed to Mayavati in the Himalayas, about fifty miles east of Almora. Reference has been made above to Svāmījī's tour in the Alps mountains in July and August, 1896, in the company of Mr. and Mrs. Sevier. "In a little village at the foot of the Alps between Mont Blanc and the Little St. Bernard, he conceived the idea of founding a monastery in the Himālayas. He said to his companions: 'Oh, I long for a monastery in the Himālayas, where I can retire from the labours of my life and spend the rest of my days in meditation. It will be a centre for work and meditation, where my Indian and Western disciples can live together, and

[8] Nikhilananda, 129.

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I shall train them as workers. The former will go out as preachers of Vedānta to the West, and the latter will devote their lives to the good of India'."[9] This dream was fulfilled when amid the beautiful and grand natural scenery of the Himalayas the Advaita Āśrama was founded at Mayavati. The *Prabuddha Bhārata* is still being published from this Āśrama. Another journal, *Udbodhana*, a fortnightly in Bengali, was started on 14 January, 1899. It was later converted into a monthly, and is still regarded as a powerful organ of the Mission in Bengali. The *Prabuddha Bhārata* and the *Udbodhana* have served as the most potent instruments for propagating the ideas and messages of Svāmī Vivekānanda in India and abroad.

Shortly after the Belur Maṭh was established as the central seat of the monastic order, the Rāmakrishna Mission Association ceased to function as an independent organisation, and the *Maṭh* authorities themselves carried on the philanthropic and charitable work originally undertaken by the Mission Association.[10]

"Soon the need was felt to conduct extensive philanthropic, charitable, educational, and missionary work. Therefore a separate organization, called the Ramakrishna Mission, was set up to carry on these activities, and a legal status was given to it in 1909. Its membership was open to monks and laymen. But the management of the Ramakrishna Mission was vested in a Governing Body, which, for the time being, consisted of the

[9] Ibid., 103.

[10] Gambhirananda, 131.

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Trustees of the Belur *Maṭh*. Both the Ramakrishna *Maṭh* at Belur, also called the Belur *Maṭh*, and the Ramakrishna Mission now have branches all over India. The members of the *Maṭh* devote themselves mainly to the spiritual practices of study, prayer, worship, and meditation, whereas the members of the Mission carry on public activities in various fields".[11]

It is very likely that the idea of a permanent Mission as distinct from the *Maṭh* or monastic organisation was due, at least partly, to the belief among a section of the monks, that the missionary work was not compatible with the true teachings of Rāmakṛishṇa. How this feeling existed and created a great difficulty at the very beginning and how Svāmījī overcame it has been mentioned above. But the belief persisted and one day it reached a climax. As the incident revealed the inner self of Svāmījī, it may be described at some length.

Even after the foundation of the Belur *Maṭh* and the practical demonstration of service, such as has been mentioned above in connection with the Calcutta plague, "Swami Vivekananda could not completely convince some of his brother-disciples about his new conception of religion, namely, the worship of God through the service of man. They had heard Śri Ramakrishna speak time and again against preaching, excessive study of the scriptures, and charitable activities, and exhort aspirants to intensify their love of God through prayer

[11] Nikhilananda, 127.

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and meditation in solitude. Therefore they regarded Vivekananda's activities in the West as out of harmony with the Master's teachings. One of them said bluntly to the Swami, 'You did not preach our Master in America; you only preached yourself'. The Swami retorted with equal bluntness, 'Let people understand me first; then they will understand Śri Ramakrishna'.[12]

"But things came to a climax one day at Balaram's house in Calcutta, when Swami Jogananda, a brother-disciple whom Śri Ramakrishna had pointed out as belonging to his 'inner circle' of devotees, said that the Master had emphasized *bhakti* alone for spiritual seekers and that philanthropic activities, organizations, homes of service for the public good, and patriotic work were the Swami's own peculiar ideas, the result of his Western education and travel in Europe and America."[13]

Svāmījī at first replied to it in good humour. But he suddenly flared up. "You think you have understood Sri Ramakrishna better than myself! .... Your *Bhakti* is sentimental nonsense which makes one impotent. Hands off! Who cares for your Ramakrishna? Who cares for your *Bhakti* and *Mukti?* Who cares what the scriptures say? I will go into a thousand hells cheerfully, if I can rouse my countrymen, immersed in *Tamas,* to stand on their own feet and be *men* inspired with the spirit of *Karma-yoga.* I am not a follower of Ramakrishna or any one, I

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid., 128.

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am a follower of him only who carries out my plans! I am not a follower of Ramakrishna or anyone, but of him only who serves and helps others, without caring for his own *Bhakti* and *Mukti*".[14]

"The Swami's voice was choked with emotion, his body shook, and his eyes flashed fire. Quickly he went to the next room. A few moments later some of his brother disciples entered the room and found him absorbed in meditation, tears flowing from his half-closed eyes. After nearly an hour the Swami got up, washed his face, and joined his spiritual brothers in the drawing-room. His features still showed traces of the violent storm through which he had just passed; but he had recovered his calmness. He said to them softly: 'When a man attains *bhakti*, his heart and nerves become so soft and delicate that he cannot bear even the touch of a flower: .... I cannot think or talk of Śri Ramakrishna long without being overwhelmed. So I am always trying to bind myself with the iron chains of *jñāna*, for still my work for my motherland is unfinished and my message to the world not fully delivered. So as soon as I find that those feelings of *bhakti* are trying to come up and sweep me off my feet, I give a hard knock to them and make myself firm and adamant by bringing up austere *jñāna*. Oh, I have work to do! I am a slave of Ramakrishna, who left his work to be done by me and will not give me rest

[14] Life (English), III. 158-9; (Bengali), III. 723-25.

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till I have finished it. And oh, how shall I speak of him? Oh, his love for me'!"[15]

4. *Tour in North India*

The multifarious works for consolidating the newly founded organization told heavily upon Svāmījī's health and he proceeded to Almora on the advice of his physicians. But there was no rest for him. He visited Lakhnau on his way to Almora. After a short rest which improved his health, he made a whirlwind tour in course of which he visited Bareilly, Amballa, Amritsar, Dharamsala, Muree, Kashmir, Jammu, Lahore and Dehradun. At Dehradun he organized a daily class for his disciples and companions, and it was continued throughout his subsequent trip to various places, including Delhi, Alwar, Khetri, Kishengarh, Ajmere, Jodhpur, Indore and Khandwa. Throughout this prolonged tour, from May, 1897, to the end of the year, there were repetitions of the scenes of his triumphal march from Colombo to Calcutta earlier in the year, namely receiving addresses of welcome and delivering lectures. So he received ovation throughout India, literally from Cape Comorin to the Himalayas. In some places he not only spoke in reply to the Welcome Address, but also delivered series of lectures preaching his message.

In view of his prolonged lecture tour it is not surprising that Svāmījī's health broke down again shortly after his return to Calcutta. He proceeded

[15] Nikhilananda, 128-9.

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to Darjeeling on 30 March, 1898, but had to return to Calcutta for plague relief work as mentioned before. After it was over, Svāmījī, accompanied by his European disciples, proceeded to Almora where Mr. and Mrs. Sevier were living.

From Almora Svāmījī and his European disciples went to Kashmir, and they all stayed as guests of Mrs. Ole Bull at Islamabad. From there Svāmījī, accompanied only by Sister Niveditā made a pilgrimage to Amarnāth, famous for the image of Śiva in a big cave. He followed the usual rules and practices of a pilgrim all the way. As he entered the cave (August 2) with his body smeared with ashes, his face became radiant with emotion of *bhakti*, and he prostrated himself before the image of Śiva, which was all ice. After his return the party proceeded to Srinagar and stayed there from 8 August to 30 September. The Mahārājā of Kashmir, in token of his respect and reverence for Svāmījī, offered to establish a monastery and a Sanskrit College. But the proposal was vetoed by the British Government.

During his stay in Kashmir Svāmījī suddenly developed an intense devotion to Kālī and depicted his vision of the goddess in her terrible aspect in one of the finest poems he ever wrote. On 30 September, Svāmījī went to a temple of the goddess, known as Kshīrabhavānī, and stayed there alone for a week. Here he had a remarkable experience, which has been described as follows by a devotee: "He had a vision of the Goddess and found Her a living Deity. But the temple had

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been destroyed by the Moslem invaders, and the image placed in a niche surrounded by ruins. Surveying this desecration, the Swami felt distress at heart and said to himself: 'How could the people have permitted such sacrilege without offering strenuous resistance? If I had been here then, I would never have allowed such a thing. I would have laid down my life to protect the Mother'. Thereupon he heard the voice of the Goddess saying: 'What if unbelievers should enter My temple and defile My image? What is that to you? Do you protect Me, or do I protect you?' Referring to this experience after his return, he said to his disciples: 'All my patriotism is gone. Everything is gone. Now it is only 'Mother! Mother!' I have been very wrong ... I am only a little child.' He wanted to say more, but could not; he declared that it was not fitting that he should go on. Significantly, he added that *spiritually* he was no longer bound to the world."[16]

5. *Activities in Calcutta*

The party left Kashmir on 11 October, 1898, and Svāmījī arrived at Belur on the 18th. He seemed to have been very ill and suffered from painful attacks of asthma. But he plunged headlong into activities. The chief of these was the consecration of the Belur *Maṭh* on 9 December, as mentioned above. But Svāmījī's normal daily routine duties were heavy enough. As is the Indian habit, visitors came to him at all hours for

[16] Ibid., 144.

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religious instruction and he had to talk to them. "When the brother-monks pressed him to receive people only at appointed hours, he replied: 'They take so much trouble to come, walking all the way from their homes, and can I, sitting here, not speak a few words to them, merely because I risk my health a little'?"[17]

Svāmījī also used to devote considerable time and attention to provide suitable training for the monks and novices, for they were to carry his messages and work out his ideas in practice, in future. "He encouraged them in their meditation and manual work, himself setting the example. Sometimes he would cook for them, sometimes knead bread, till the garden, or dig a well. Again, he would train them to be preachers by asking them to speak before a gathering without preparation. Constantly he reminded the monks of their monastic vows, especially chastity and renunciation, without which deep spiritual perception was impossible. He attached great importance to physical exercise and said: 'I want sappers and miners in the army of religion! So, boys, set yourselves to the task of training your muscles! For ascetics, mortification is all right. For workers, well-developed bodies, muscles of iron and nerves of steel.' He urged them to practise austerities and meditation in solitude. For the beginners he laid down strict rules about food. They were to rise early, meditate, and perform their religious duties scrupulously. Health must not be neglected

[17] Ibid., 148.

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and the company of worldly people should be avoided. But above all, he constantly admonished them to give up idleness in any shape or form.

"Of himself he said: 'No rest for me! I shall die in harness! I love action! Life is a battle, and one must always be in action, to use a military phrase. Let me live and die in action': He was a living hymn of work."[18]

His advice or direction to his disciples may be summed up in his own words. "You will go to hell if you seek your own salvation! Seek the salvation of others if you want to reach the Highest. Kill out the desire for personal *mukti*. This is the greatest spiritual discipline. Work, my children, work with your whole heart and soul! That is the thing. Mind not the fruit of work. What if you go to hell working for others? That is worth more than to gain heaven by seeking your own salvation. ... You must try to combine in your life immense idealism with immense practicality. You must be prepared to go into deep meditation now, and the next moment you must be ready to go and cultivate the fields. You must be prepared to explain the intricacies of the scriptures now, and the next moment to go and sell the produce of the fields in the market. ... The true man is he who is strong as strength itself and yet possesses a woman's heart".[19]

He spoke of the power of faith: "The history of the world is the history of a few men who had faith in themselves. That faith calls out the inner

[18] Ibid., 148-9.

[19] Ibid., 149-50.

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divinity. You can do anything. You fail only when you do not strive sufficiently to manifest infinite power. As soon as a man loses faith in himself, death comes. Believe first in yourself and then in God. A handful of strong men will move the world. We need a heart to feel, a brain to conceive, and a strong arm to do the work. . . . One man contains within him the whole universe. One particle of matter has all the energy of the universe at its back. In a conflict between the heart and the brain, follow your heart".[20]

6. *Second visit to the West*

At the end of 1898 Svāmījī decided to go to the West a second time and actually started on 20 June, 1899, accompanied by Sister Niveditā and Svāmī Turīyānanda, and reached London on 31 July. After two weeks' stay there he proceeded to New York. At the beginning of November he went to California and delivered a series of lectures, not less than hundred in number, at different places in the State before large audiences sometimes numbering about two thousand. A centre of Vedānta teaching was established in San Francisco and Svāmī Turīyānanda was put in charge of it. Two other centres were opened at Oakland and Alameda. He was glad to find that the Vedanta Society at New York had made good progress under Svāmī Abhedānanda. He gave a few lectures here, and removed some difficulties that had cropped up in the organizational side. During

[20] Ibid., 150.

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this second visit to America for about a year, Svāmījī furthered the progress of the work he had begun during his first visit, by opening new centres as well as by contacting new persons, and above all by his whirlwind tour of lectures.

While at California Svāmījī received an invitation to attend the Congress of the History of Religions, organized as a part of the Paris Exposition Universelle (generally known as Paris Exhibition). He accepted the invitation and left for Paris on 20 July, 1900. He delivered only two lectures in the Congress. In one of these he vigorously opposed the view of a delegate that *Śālagrāma-śilā* and *Śiva-Liṅgam* were mere phallic symbols. Svāmījī came into contact with many Europeans eminent in different spheres of life.

After spending about three months in France he proceeded to Egypt, visiting Vienna, Constantinople and Athens on his way. After a short stay there he left for India and arrived at Belur, without any previous intimation, late at night on 9 December, 1900.

Two things are specially remarkable during Svāmījī's second visit to the West. In the first place, he was being gradually detached more and more from the external world, and his bearing was one of complete indifference to his surroundings. He looked tired and world-weary. On 14 August he wrote to a friend that he did not expect to live long. He wrote to Turīyānanda; "My body and mind are broken down." On 25 August, he wrote to Niveditā: "Now I am free, as I have

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kept no power or authority or position for me in the work, I also have resigned the Presidentship of the Ramakrishna Mission. The Maṭh etc., belong now to the immediate disciples of Rāmakrishna except myself. The Presidentship is now Brahmānanda's—next it will fall on Premānanda etc., in turn. I am so glad a whole load is off me. Now I am happy."[21]

The second noticeable feature is a great change in his views of American civilization. "During his first visit he had been enthusiastic about almost everything he saw—the power, the organization, the material prosperity, the democracy, and the spirit of freedom and justice. But now he was greatly disillusioned. In America's enormous combinations and ferocious struggle for supremacy he discovered the power of Mammon. He saw that the commercial spirit was composed, for the most part, of greed, selfishness, and a struggle for privilege and power. He was disgusted with the ruthlessness of wealthy businessmen, swallowing up the small tradespeople by means of large combinations. That was indeed tyranny. He could admire an organization; 'But what beauty is there among a pack of wolves?' he said to a disciple. He also noticed, in all their nakedness, the social vices and the arrogance of race, religion, and colour. America, he confided to Miss MacLeod, would not be the instrument to harmonize East and West."[22]

Had this feeling something to do with his weari-

[21] Ibid., 163. [22] Ibid.

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ness of life? He had concluded his opening address in the Parliament of Religions with the following words: "Sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful earth. They have filled the earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilisation and sent whole nations to despair. Had it not been for these horrible demons, human society would be far more advanced than it is now. But their time is come: and I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honour of this convention may be the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal." Did he realize that these hopes were crumbling to dust? Who knows? But there is no doubt that he returned to India with a broken mind and body.

7. *The Last Days*

Immediately on his arrival at Belur on 24 January, 1901, he heard of the death of Mr. Sevier and proceeded to Mayavati to see Mrs. Sevier. On his way he heard of the death of Mahārājā of Khetri, one of his most devoted disciples. All these must have worked upon his feeble health. But he had no rest, and proceeded to East Bengal on a lecturing tour on 18 March, and visited Dacca. He also went to two places of pilgrimage in Assam, as his widowed mother had expressed an earnest desire to visit

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them. This was also an object of his tour, for on 26 January he had written to Mrs. Ole Bull: "I am going to take my mother on pilgrimage. ... This is the one great wish of a Hindu widow. I have brought only misery to my people all my life. I am trying to fulfil this one wish of hers".[23] It was during this tour that in a public meeting he had declared, addressing the youths of Bengal who had very little physical stamina, "You will be nearer to God through football than through the *Bhagavad Gītā*."[24]

Svāmījī had been suffering from both asthma and diabetes, and his health, already poor, was going from bad to worse. At the earnest request of his disciples he lived in Belur for about seven months in comparative retirement. Comparative, because he could by no means be dissuaded from giving instructions to his disciples. But on the whole he led a relaxed life surrounded by his pet animals—a dog, a she-goat, an antelope, a stork, several cows, sheep, ducks and geese, and a kid called Matru, decked with a collar of little bells, with whom Svāmījī played like a child.

Though he was getting worse day by day, the Japanese artist, Okakura, visited him, and at his earnest request he went in his company to Bodh-Gaya. From there he proceeded to Banaras where he laid the foundation of what later became a great organization known as Ramakrishna Mission Home of Service. This tour during January-February, 1902, was his last wandering. On his return to

[23] Ibid., 166.

[24] Ibid., 167.

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Belur the illness was aggravated. Though his mind was fully alert, he gradually assigned all his responsibilities to other hands. He was fully conscious and active till the last day, 4 July, 1902. He performed his normal works, took his meal with all the inmates of the monastery with great relish, held a class on Sanskrit grammar for three hours, went out for afternoon walk, and sat in the verandah, talking merrily with his brother-monks and disciples. As soon as the bell rang for evening service, others went to the temple but Svāmījī, with one attendant novice, retired to his room. He sat in meditation at 7 p.m., and after an hour lay down quietly on his bed with his rosary still in hand. About an hour later his hands trembled a little and he took two deep breaths at the interval of a minute or two. Then he lay still. It was ten minutes past nine. The attendant thought he was in *samādhi*. The others, who came on hearing the news, were of the same view, and began to chant the Master's name. Physicians were sent for, and they declared at about midnight that the great soul had left its bodily frame.

The feelings of his disciples, friends and admirers may well be described by the following lines which Svāmījī himself wrote *in memoriam* to J. J. Goodwin (1898):

Speed forth, O soul! upon thy star-strewn path;
Speed, blissful one! where thought is ever free,
Where time and space no longer mist the view,
Eternal Peace and blessings be with thee!

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Thy service true, complete thy sacrifice,
Thy home the heart of love transcendent find;
Remembrance sweet, that kills all space and time,
Like altar roses fill thy place behind!

Thy bonds are broke, thy quest in bliss is found,
And one with That which comes as Death
and Life;
Thou helpful one! unselfish ever on earth,
Ahead! still help with love this world of strife![25]

[25] *C.W.* IV. 389.

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Chapter Four

GENERAL REVIEW

1. *Unique Personality*

We have described the main incidents in the life of Svāmī Vivekānanda, bringing out as far as possible his ideas, ideals, messages and teachings, so far as they are associated with those incidents. But his ideas and teachings are scattered throughout his writings and speeches, and they cover very wide grounds; for there is hardly any aspect of life which he has not touched upon or elaborated in his own way. It is not possible to analyse or even refer to them all, and we may only present his views on some essential topics in broad outline. But before doing so it is necessary to take a glimpse of his wonderful personality.

a. *Spiritual Powers*

Vivekānanda was *par excellence* a religious devotee—a saint of the highest category gifted with extraordinary spiritual powers. Many stories are told by his devotees which can only be explained on the theory that he was endowed with supernatural powers and had a vision of God. Reference has been made above to the views of Rāmakṛishṇa who not only referred to Vivekānanda as the *Yogin* or ascetic of the highest order, but is also said to have transferred all his spiritual powers to his devoted disciple. This aspect has been treated

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in detail in many biographies of Svāmījī, specially those written by his devotees. These are more or less a matter of faith, and a historical review, such as these lectures are intended to be,[1] is not the proper place to discuss them. But his whole life, as described above, is sure to convince even a sceptic that Vivekānanda possessed, in an extraordinary degree, religious sentiments and spiritual outlook, in the true sense of these terms. But this aspect of Vivekānanda's life on which, for obvious reasons, the world's attention is riveted, hides from view some other characteristics which by themselves would have made him a remarkable man. As a powerful dazzling light practically hides from view lights of lesser powers, though otherwise they would have been sufficiently noticeable, so the manifold qualities of head and heart possessed by Narendranāth Datta escape our notice in the presence of Svāmī Vivekānanda. It is, therefore, necessary to review them briefly.

b. *An Orator*

Of his erudition and knowledge it is hardly necessary to say anything, as his books and speeches bear testimony to that. But as these are prized mostly for their contents, it is not often sufficiently realized that his literary gifts and oratorical powers were also of a very high order. It is no longer possible to have direct evidence of his oratorical gifts as no living man of high autho-

[1] As stated in the Preface this book is merely the printed text of the three lectures I delivered at the Patna University.

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rity ever heard him speak, but we may judge its quality by contemporary references. The rapturous applause with which the whole audience greeted his first speech in the Parliament of Religions has been noted above. But it is not generally known that his speeches in America had attracted notice in high circles even before that. He delivered a lecture in a church at Annisquam, Massachusetts, in the last week of August, 1893. The local paper described it as a fine lecture.[2] Referring to it Mrs. Wright wrote: "He is wonderfully clever and clear in putting his arguments and laying his trains (of thoughts) to a conclusion. You can't trip him up, nor get ahead of him".[3] After his appearance in the Parliament of Religions he attained fame as a great orator. An American paper, *New York Critique*, referred to him as "an orator by divine right". Still more handsome is the tribute paid by the well-known poetess, the late Harriet Monroe, who was for many years editor of *Poetry, A Magazine of Verse*. Miss Monroe attended the World's Fair in 1893, and years later in her autobiography, *A Poet's Life*, recorded her impressions of the Parliament of Religions and of Svāmījī: "But the handsome monk in the orange robe gave us in perfect English a masterpiece. His personality, dominant, magnetic, his voice, rich as a bronze bell; the controlled fervor of his feeling; the beauty of his message to the Western world he was facing for the first time—these combined to give us a rare and perfect

[2] Burke, 26. [3] Ibid, 20.

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moment of supreme emotion. It was human eloquence at its highest pitch."[4] The *Chicago Advocate,* though not a friendly critic of Svāmījī on account of his attitude towards Christianity, was constrained to observe that "his knowledge of English is as though it were his mother tongue".[5] Referring to the session of Parliament on 19 September, when Svāmījī read his paper on Hinduism, a local paper wrote: "Great crowds of people, the most of whom were women, pressed around the doors leading to the hall of Columbus, an hour before the time stated for opening the afternoon session, for it had been announced that Swami Vivekananda, the popular Hindu Monk, who looks so much like McCullough's Othello, was to speak."[6] The reason is thus explained by Rev. W. H. Thomas: "Of the many learned men in the East who took part in the great World's Parliament of Religions, Vivekananda was the most popular favourite, and when it was known that he was to speak, thousands were turned away for want of room. Nor was it curiosity alone that drew the masses: for those who heard him once were so impressed by the magnetism of his fine presence, the charm and power of his eloquence, his perfect command of the English language and the deep interest in what he had to say, that they desired all the more to hear him again."[7]

c. *Literary and Musical Gifts*

The literary gifts of Svāmījī are best judged

[4] Ibid, 59-60. [5] Ibid, 60. [6] Ibid, 74. [7] Ibid, 64.

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by his writings in Bengali. These are not voluminous, as he generally wrote in English and his religious works are mostly in that language. His Bengali writings are practically confined to the articles in the *Udbodhana,* later collected in four books, and his letters. Apart from the rich store of thought and information contained in these, they are specially remarkable for the simple colloquial language in which they were written, at a time when a heavy and Sanskritised style was the fashion of the day. It was then the general impression that serious topics could not be discussed in colloquial language. Svāmījī showed in his articles that such a thing was possible. He himself described his ideas in the following words: "Simplicity is the secret. My ideal of language is my Master's language, most colloquial and yet most expressive. It must express the thought which is intended to be conveyed".[8] When, in pursuance of this ideal, he wrote his articles in the *Udbodhana* in a new colloquial style devised by himself, he came in for a good deal of ridicule and harsh criticism. It was the great poet Rabindranāth Tagore who first appreciated the merit of the new Bengali style introduced by Svāmījī. He cited Svāmījī's book (*Prāchya O Pāśchātya*) as a model for showing how colloquial Bengali can be made a living and forceful language. "Such ideas, such language, similarly such penetrating

[8] *C.W.*, V. 259. Also cf. Svāmījī's article on the Bengali Language in Bengali (*Bhābbār Kathā*, pp. 9-13; English translation in *C.W.*, VI. 189-92). A passage has been quoted in Appendix II.

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liberal vision, and the ideal of synthesis between the East and the West that this book contains is surprising to one".[9]

It is idle to expect an Indian writer achieving literary fame by writing in English. But the beautiful language of his English prose writings reflects great credit upon him. Some of his English poems, also, have reached a sublimity of no mean order. The best is 'Kali the Mother',[10] which depicts the divine aspect of terror and destruction in a noble and beautiful poetic imagery. A few others like 'My Play is done'. and 'Song of the Sannyasin', 'To the Awakened India' and 'Hold on yet a While'[11] are also excellent poems. The same thing may be said of some of his Bengali poems. On the whole, it may well be believed that if Narendranāth Datta had not been Svāmī Vivekānanda, Bengal might have one more addition to the large number of her good poets of the nineteenth century. The same thing may be said of his historical knowledge, which was both profound and extensive. Although he wrote only one or two short essays on historical subjects, his penetrating insight into the historical evolution, not only in India but all over the world from ancient to modern times, is revealed in numerous passages scattered throughout his speeches and writings. His comprehensive grasp of the main currents of world history and the power to express it in simple

[9] Datta, 293-4. A few passages from Svāmījī's Bengali writings, as specimens of style have been quoted in Appendix II.

[10] Cf. Appendix I. [11] Ibid.

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language is illustrated by his description of the Renaissance, quoted in Appendix II, C.3. He has given an altogether new interpretation of the evolution of Indian history through ages which, considering the time in which he wrote, displays an amazing depth of knowledge and critical judgment. He emphasized the truth that "in ancient India the centres of national life were always the intellectual and spiritual and not political", and interpreted on that basis the course of evolution in Indian history right up to the British period. He was also familiar with the scientific and critical method of historical research and modern developments in Archaeology and Ethnology.[12]

Narendranāth also possessed musical talents of a very high order. He was regularly trained in high class music and his songs not only profoundly affected Rāmakṛishṇa, but also thrilled the hearts of a Punjabi audience at Lahore.

d. *Connoisseur of Art*

Dr. Bhupendranāth Datta, the younger brother of Svāmījī, says that the latter inherited the taste for fine arts from his family, and another younger brother, Mahendranāth Datta, supplies the following information. "*Dādā* (elder brother) used to draw pictures in his boyhood. He used to draw coloured pictures with water-colors that used to be sold at four annas a box. He could paint well,

[12] Cf. *C.W.*, VI. 157-67; *Cent. Vol.* pp. XXI-XLIII. Appendix II, B-3, C-3.

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besides, he had a good voice in singing."[13] Once when, unknown to name and fame, Svāmījī was staying at the house of a Barrister at Poona, an incident occurred which showed that he had cultivated the study of art even in advanced age. "Once somebody had a conversation with him about the paintings of Ravi Varma, then famous as the innovator of a new technique in Indian art of painting. Swāmījī pointed out the defects of the painter. The interlocutor was taken aback that how a begging friar could dare to criticise Ravi Varma, who then enjoyed India-wide celebrity. The crushing reply came from the host himself who answered that Swamiji was an adept in art."[14] Svāmījī also made a study of ancient Indian art. He inspired Sister Niveditā to hold a discourse on "Fine Arts of Ancient India" at New York in August, 1899.[15] "Again, in 1900 at the Congress of the History of Religions held in Paris, Swami Vivekananda protested against the then accepted theory of Greek influence on Indian arts."[16] The view he then expressed has been subsequently accepted by eminent scholars on Indian art.

Svāmījī expressed his views on art on many occasions, which show a high and clear conception of the subject. Two passages may be quoted: "Art has its origin in the expression of some idea

[13] Datta, 299. [14] Ibid, 300.

[15] Kalidas Nag in the Golden Jubilee Number of *Udbodhana*.

[16] "As the Greeks had learnt good many things from India, likewise the Indian artists have received something from the Greek artists; but it is not true that the soul of Indian art was overshadowed at any time by the Greek influence." (Datta, 301).

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in whatever man produces. Where there is no expression of idea, however much there may be a display of colours, light and shade, perfection in drawings, high technique—and so on, it cannot be styled as true art". "Art is representing the beautiful. There must be art in everything. The difference between architecture and building is that the former expresses an idea, while the latter is merely a structure built on economical principles. The value of matter depends solely on its capacities of expressing ideas".[17] But he also criticised the Hindu Brahmanical art though it expressed an idea: "That the Hindus absorbed in the ideal lacked in realistic observation is evident from this: Take painting and sculpture, what do you see in the Hindu painting? All sorts of grotesque and unnatural figures. What do you see in a Hindu temple? A *chaturbhanga* (bent four times) or some such things. But take into consideration any Italian picture or Grecian statue . . . what a study of nature you find in them!"[18] Elsewhere he continued in the same strain: "The secret of Greek Art is its imitation of Nature even to the minutest details; whereas the secret of Indian art is to represent the ideal. . . . The Indian tendency, on the other hand, to represent the ideal, the supersensual, has become degraded into painting grotesque images. Now, true Art can be compared to a lily which springs from the ground, takes its nourishment from the ground, is in touch with the ground, and yet is quite high above it (when full

[17] Datta, 303. [18] Ibid, 303-4.

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blown). So Art must be in touch with Nature,—and wherever that touch is gone, Art degenerates —yet it must be above Nature".[19]

We have it on the authority of the famous artist Nandalal Bose that Sister Niveditā was inspired by Svāmījī to understand the spiritual import of Indian fine arts, and she in her turn inspired E. B. Havell and several Indian artists including Nandalal Bose.[20]

All these certainly indicate that Narendranāth Datta might have been an artist or fine art-critic if he had not been Svāmī Vivekānanda.

2. *Views on Hindu Religion*

The personality of Narendranāth Datta was, however, completely submerged beneath the high degree of spiritual fervour and saintliness of Svāmī Vivekānanda and his noble ideals and stirring messages to the people of India. These can only be briefly referred to here under some broad headings.

To Svāmījī the first and foremost object was religion which he considered to be the bed-rock of Indian culture. His general approach to this may be understood from the following:

"I see that each nation, like each individual, has one theme in this life, which is its centre, the principal note round which every other note comes to form the harmony. In one nation political power is its vitality, as in England. Artistic life in another, and so on. In India religious life forms

[19] Ibid, 304-5. [20] Ibid, 306-9.

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the centre, the keynote of the whole music of national life; and if any nation attempts to throw off its national vitality, the direction which has become its own through the transmission of centuries,—that nation dies, if it succeeds in the attempt. And, therefore, if you succeed in the attempt to throw off your religion and take up either politics or society, or any other thing as your centre, as the vitality of your national life, the result will be, that you will become extinct. To prevent this you must make all and everything work through that vitality of your religion."[21]

But by religion he did not understand creeds and rituals but the essentials of Hindu religion. He gave very popular exposition of this in his lecture on Hinduism in the Parliament of Religions on 19 September, 1893, as mentioned above. A few passages may be quoted:[22]

"From the high spiritual flights of the Vedanta philosophy, of which the latest discoveries of science seem like echoes, to the low ideas of idolatry with its multifarious mythology, the agnosticism of the Buddhists, and the atheism of the Jains, each and all have a place in the Hindu's religion.

"Where then, the question arises, where is the common centre to which all these widely diverging radii converge? Where is the common basis upon which all these seemingly hopeless contradictions rest? And this is the question I shall attempt to answer.

[21] *Lectures*, 66; *C.W.*, III. 220.
[22] For the Lecture, cf. *C.W.*, I. 6-20.

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"The Hindus have received their religion through revelation, the Vedas. They hold that the Vedas are without beginning and without end. It may sound ludicrous to this audience, how a book can be without beginning or end. But by the Vedas no books are meant. They mean the accumulated treasury of spiritual laws discovered by different persons in different times. Just as the law of gravitation existed before its discovery and would exist if all humanity forgot it, so is it with the laws that govern the spiritual world. The moral, ethical, and spiritual relations between soul and soul and between individual spirits and the Father of all spirits were there before their discovery, and would remain even if we forgot them."

Svāmījī then proceeds to explain the meaning of soul. "Here I stand and if I shut my eyes, and try to conceive my existence, "I", "I", "I", what is the idea before me? The idea of a body. Am I then nothing but a combination of material substances? The Vedas declare, "No". I am a spirit living in a body. I am not the body; the body will die, but I shall not die. Here am I in this body, it will fall, but I shall go on living. I had also a past. ... The Hindu believes that he is a spirit ... that every soul is a circle whose circumference is nowhere, but whose centre is located in the body, and that death means the change of this centre from body to body."

This brings in the ideas of transmigration and *karma*. "A soul with a certain tendency would by the laws of affinity take birth in a body which

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is the fittest instrument for the display of that tendency." So the present birth of a human being is "determined by our past actions, and the future by the present. The soul will go on evolving up or reverting back from birth to birth and death to death. But here is another question: Is man a tiny boat in a tempest, raised one moment on the foamy crest of a billow and dashed down into a yawning chasm the next, rolling to and fro at the mercy of good and bad actions? The heart sinks at the idea, yet this is the law of Nature. Is there no hope? Is there no escape?" The Vedic sage replies—'Hear, ye children of immortal bliss, even ye that reside in higher spheres: I have found the Ancient One who is beyond all darkness, all delusion: knowing Him alone you shall be saved from death over again'. Ye are the children of God, the sharers of immortal bliss, holy and perfect beings. Ye divinities on earth—sinners! It is a sin to call a man so; it is a standing libel on human nature." This leads on to the discussion of the nature of God. "He is everywhere, the pure and formless One, the Almighty and the All-merciful." And how to worship Him? Through love. "He is to be worshipped as the one beloved, dearer than everything in this and the next life. A man ought to live in this world like a lotus leaf which grows in water but is never moistened by water; so a man ought to live in the world—his heart to God and his hands to work. The Vedas teach that the soul is divine, only held in the bondage of matter; perfection will be reached when

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this bond will burst, and the word they use for it is, therefore, *Mukti*—freedom, freedom from the bonds of imperfection, freedom from death and misery.

"And this bondage can only fall off through the mercy of God, and this mercy comes on the pure. So purity is the condition of His mercy. How does that mercy act? He reveals Himself to the pure heart: the pure and the stainless see God, yea, even in this life; then and then only all the crookedness of the heart is made straight. Then all doubt ceases. This is no more the freak of a terrible law of causation; This is the very centre, the very vital conception of Hinduism. ... So the best proof a Hindu sage gives about the soul, about God, is: 'I have seen the soul: I have seen God'. And that is the only condition of perfection. Thus the whole object of their system is by constant struggle to become perfect, to become divine, to reach God and see God: and this reaching God, seeing God, becoming perfect even as the Father in Heaven is perfect, constitutes the religion of the Hindus.

"And what becomes of a man when he attains perfection? He lives a life of bliss infinite. He enjoys infinite and perfect bliss, having obtained the only thing in which man ought to have pleasure, namely God, and enjoys the bliss with God."

In other words, he becomes one with Brahman. Svāmījī points out that this, the Advaitavāda of Vedānta, is in full accordance with science which

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is nothing but the finding of unity. Svāmījī then descends from the enunciation of Hindu philosophy to the religion of the ignorant Hindu. He first defends worship of images against hostile criticism: "By the law of association, the material image calls up the mental idea and vice versa. This is why the Hindu uses an external symbol when he worships. He will tell you, it helps to keep his mind fixed on the Being to whom he prays. He knows as well as you do that the image is not God, is not omnipresent.

"As we find that somehow or other, by the laws of our mental constitution, we have to associate our ideas of infinite with the image of the blue sky, or of the sea, so we naturally connect our idea of holiness with the image of church, a mosque, or a cross. The Hindus have associated the idea of holiness, purity, truth, omnipresence, and such other ideas with different images and forms. ... Man is to become divine by realising the divine; Idols or temples or churches or books are only the supports, the helps, of his spiritual childhood: but on and on he must progress.

"He must not stop anywhere. 'External worship, material worship', say the scriptures, 'is the lowest stage, struggling to rise high, mental prayer is the next stage, but the highest stage is when the Lord has been realised'. Mark, the same earnest man who is kneeling before the idol tells you, 'Him the sun cannot express, nor the moon, nor the stars, the lightning cannot express Him, nor what we speak of as fire: through Him they shine'. But he

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does not abuse any one's idol or call its worship sin. He recognises in it a necessary stage of life. 'The child is father of the man'. Would it be right for an old man to say that childhood is a sin or youth a sin? ... To the Hindu, man is not travelling from error to truth, but from truth to truth, from lower to higher truth. To him all the religions, from the lowest fetishism to the highest absolutism, mean so many attempts of the human soul to grasp and realise the infinite, each determined by the conditions of its birth and association, and each of these marks a stage of progress; and every soul is a young eagle soaring higher and higher, gathering more and more strength till it reaches the Glorious Sun.

"Unity in variety is the plan of nature, and the Hindu has recognised it. Every other religion lays down certain fixed dogmas, and tries to force society to adopt them. It places before society only one coat which must fit Jack and John and Henry, all alike. If it does not fit John or Henry, he must go without a coat to cover his body. The Hindus have discovered that the absolute can only be realised, or thought of, or stated through the relative: and the images, crosses, and crescents are simply so many symbols—so many pegs to hang the spiritual ideas on. It is not that this help is necessary for every one, but those that do not need it have no right to say that it is wrong. Nor is it compulsory in Hinduism." Svāmījī admits that the Hindus have their faults such as the rigorous ascetic practices bordering on the torture of the

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body. "But", says he, "mark this, they are always for punishing their own bodies, and never for cutting the throats of their neighbours. If the Hindu fanatic burns himself on the pyre, he never lights the fire of Inquisition. And even this cannot be laid at the door of his religion any more than the burning of witches can be laid at the door of Christianity."

Svāmījī emphasises the catholicity of Hinduism which accepts every religion as only "evolving a God out of the material man and the same God is the inspirer of all of them". "I challenge", says he "the world to find, throughout the whole system of Sanskrit philosophy, any such expression as that the Hindu alone will be saved and not others."

Svāmījī concludes with a vision of the Universal religion. "The Hindu may have failed to carry out all his plans, but if there is ever to be a universal religion, it must be one which will have no location in place or time; which will be infinite like the God it will preach, and whose sun will shine upon the followers of Krishna and of Christ, on saints and sinners alike; which will not be Brahmanic or Buddhistic, Christian or Mohammedan, but the sum total of all these, and still have infinite space for development; which in its catholicity will embrace in its infinite arms, and find a place for, every human being from the lowest grovelling savage not far removed from the brute to the highest man towering by the virtues of his head and heart almost above humanity, making

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society stand in awe of him and doubt his human nature. It will be a religion which will have no place for persecution or intolerance in its polity, which will recognise divinity in every man and woman, and whose whole scope, whose whole force will be centred in aiding humanity to realise its own true, divine nature. Offer such a religion, and all the nations will follow you."

3. *Neo-Vedānta of Svāmījī*

As Svāmījī again and again pointed out, his view of Hindu religion is based on Vedānta. He regarded it as the real essence of Veda which is by common consent looked upon as the basis of Hinduism. But the Vedānta preached by Svāmījī has some features which distinguish it from the traditional Vedānta of Śaṅkarāchārya. Hence Svāmījī's Vedānta system is now generally referred to as Neo-Vedāntism. Śaṅkara's Vedānta is known as *Advaita* or non-dualism, pure and simple. So it is sometimes called *Kevala-advaita* or unqualified monism. It may also be called abstract monism in so far as *Brahman,* the ultimate reality, is, according to it, devoid of all qualities and distinctions (*nirguṇa* and *nirviśesha*). The Neo-Vedānta is also *advaita* inasmuch as it holds that *Brahman,* the ultimate reality, is one without a second (*ekamevādvitīyam*). But as distinguished from the traditional *Advaita* of Śaṅkara, it is a synthetic Vedānta which reconciles *dvaita* or dualism and *advaita* or non-dualism and also other theories of reality. So also it may be called con-

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crete monism in so far as it holds that *Brahman* is both qualified and quality-less (*saguṇa* and *nirguṇa*), it has forms and is also formless (*sākāra* and *nirākāra*).

"The germs of Neo-Vedāntism as also the rationale and beginning of its practical application are to be found in the life and teachings of Śrī Rāmakṛishṇa. It was left to Svāmī Vivekānanda to develop them into the philosophy of Neo-Vedāntism and lay the foundation of practical Vedānta".[23] "The main outline of this new Vedānta was drawn by Śrī Rāmakṛishṇa and it was Svāmī Vivekānanda who filled it in with elaborate reasoning so as to work up a philosophy proper. It has been very aptly said that Svāmī Vivekānanda is a commentary on Śrī Rāmakṛishṇa. But the commentator with his giant intellect and profound understanding made such distinctive contributions that his commentary becomes itself a philosophy, just as Śankara's commentary on the *Vedānta-Sūtra* is by itself a philosophy."[24] In order to understand this reference may be made to some teachings of Rāmakṛishṇa. "First, Rāmakṛishṇa teaches that *Brahman* and *Śakti* or *Kālī* are not two different realities unrelated to each other, nor are they different realities or existences inseparably related to each other as substance and quality. They are only two aspects of the same reality or two states of the same thing and, therefore, non-different (*abheda*). Just as the same water of the sea is sometimes moving and some-

[23] *Cent. Vol.*, 260. [24] Ibid, 265.

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times motionless, or the same serpent sometimes crawls and sometimes remains coiled up and motionless, so the same reality is called *Kālī* or *Brahman* according as it does or does not create, maintain and destroy the world. . . .

"Secondly, Śrī Rāmakṛishṇa teaches that it is the same reality that is the nameless and formless *Brahman* for the *Jñānī* or the man of philosophic insight, the *ātman* or pure self for the *yogī* or the man absorbed in meditation, and *Bhagavān* or Personal God for the *bhakta* or the man of devotion. Just as the same water of the ocean is congealed into the form of ice by extreme cold and is dissolved into formless water by the heat of the sun, so reality takes on form and shape for the devotee but is formless for the *jñānī* and the *yogī*. This means that the absolute reality may be formless or it may have forms, so that the worship of the forms of God has not less value and validity than the worship of the formless *Brahman*. Śrī Rāmakṛishṇa often used to illustrate the truth that God may be formless and yet may have forms by the story of the chameleon which wears different colours at different times and sometimes has no colour at all."[25]

Thirdly, that *Brahman* is present everywhere and in everything we see in this world, both animate and inanimate. The oneness of all existence was a living experience. Echoing his master's voice Vivekānanda also explained that "the world of objects is not totally negated in *Brahman*. It is

[25] Ibid, 266.

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not, as in Śaṅkara's *Advaita* it is, that *Brahman* alone is real and the world is false or illusory (*Brahma satyam, jagannmithyā*), but that in a sense the world also is real.[26]

"According to Svāmī Vivekānanda, the Vedānta does not in reality denounce the world. What it seeks to teach is the deification of the world and not its annihilation. It does not give us a suicidal advice to kill ourselves and annihilate the world. What is really intended by it is the deification of the world—giving up the world as we ordinarily think of it, as it appears to us—and to know what it really is. The Svāmī says: 'Deify it (the world); it is God alone"; and he cites the opening verse of the Īśopanishad which says: 'Whatever exists in this universe, is to be covered with the Lord'. He goes on further and says: 'You can have your wife, it does not mean that you are to abandon her, but that you are to see God in the wife'. So also, you are to see God in your children. So in everything. In life and in death, in happiness and in misery, the Lord is equally present. The whole world is full of the Lord. Open your eyes and see Him.—This is what Vedānta teaches."[27]

4. *Practical Vedānta*

But the most distinctive feature of Svāmī Vivekānanda's teaching is that he applied his philosophic principles to the affairs of everyday life. He laid emphasis on the fact that we shall

[26] Ibid, 267-9.

[27] Ibid, 269-70.

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seek salvation, no so much in the traditional way, by renouncing the world and taking to the life of a recluse, as by serving the God in man. We have seen above how this practical Vedānta was the foundation on which the whole structure of his monastic organization was built. Reference has also been made above to the opposition of his own brother-disciples to this new mode of salvation propounded by Svāmījī. He, however, not only stuck to his gun, but even went to the other extreme of denouncing every other form of salvation. His retort to his critics, that he would follow this path even if it go against the teachings of Rāmakṛishṇa indicates the depth of his feeling in the matter. The same spirit appears in a more pronounced form when he pours out his heart in a letter to Mary Hale on 9 July, 1897: "Only one idea was burning in my brain—to start the machine for elevating the Indian masses, and that I have succeeded in doing to a certain extent.

"It would have made your heart glad to see how my boys are working in the midst of famine and disease and misery—nursing by the mat-bed of the cholera-stricken pariah and feeding the starving chandāla, and the Lord sends help to me, to them, to all. . . . I feel my task is done—at most three or four years more of life are left. I have lost all wish for my salvation. I never wanted earthly enjoyments. I must see my machine in strong working order, and then, knowing for sure that I have put in a lever for the good of humanity, in India at least, which no power can

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drive back, I will sleep without caring what will be next.

"And may I be born again and again, and suffer thousands of miseries, so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls. And above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the especial object of my worship."[28]

5. *Svāmījī's Vision of India's future*

The words "in India at least" in the above passage seem to be significant. Indications are not wanting that Svāmījī's insistence on the service of God in man (*daridra-Nārāyaṇa*) was largely the result of his view about the future regeneration of India. He denounced the upper classes in the severest language. "You, the upper classes of India,—do you think you are alive? You are but mummies ten thousand years old: It is among those whom your ancestors despised as "walking carrions" that the little of vitality there is still in India is to be found; and it is you who are the real "walking corpses".[29]

He emphasized again and again that the masses were the real foundations of National life. "It is through their physical labour only are possible, the influence of the Brahmans, the progress of the Kshatriyas, and the fortune of the Vaisyas".[30]

He holds out the following vision of India's future greatness. "Let her arise—out of the

[28] Nikhilananda, 129-30. [29] Datta, 337. [30] Ibid,

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peasants' cottage, grasping the plough, out of the huts of the fisherman, ... the grocer's shop, from beside the oven of the fritter-seller. Let her emanate from the factory, from marts and from markets. Let her emerge from the groves and forests, from hills and mountains. These common people have suffered oppression for thousands of years—suffered it without murmur, and as a result have got wonderful fortitude. They have suffered eternal misery, which has given them unflinching vitality. ... Such peacefulness, such contentment, such love, such power of silent and incessant work, and such manifestation of lion's strength in times of action—where else will you find these! Skeletons of the past, there, before you, are your successors, the India that is to be. Throw those treasure-chests of yours and those jewelled rings among them—as soon as you can; and you—vanish into air, and be seen no more".[31]

6. *Svāmījī's National Ideal—influence on Arabinda, Rabindra and Gandhi*

It is not difficult to understand why Svāmījī, who always dreamt of the rise of a puissant Indian nation and looked upon the uplift of the masses as *sine qua non* for the purpose, should have put the whole emphasis of his position and personality on the solution of the problem of Indian masses. Indeed, the development of religion and spirituality and the regeneration of the down-trodden Indian masses formed the two chief planks in his

[31] Ibid, 338. For the original Bengali, see Appendix, II.

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programme for the future of India. It is interesting to note that the two greatest Indians of the twentieth century, Arabinda Ghosh and Mahātmā Gāndhi, took up these two aspects of Svāmījī's programme as the chief aims of their activities. Some of the poems of Rabindranāth indicate that he was also influenced by Svāmījī's ideas of living and working among men, and serving the God in man. In one of his poems the great poet denounces the attitude of the Hindus towards the low castes almost in the same vigorous language as Svāmījī used, and he actually uses the word *mānusher nārāyaṇa*, corresponding to *daridra nārāyaṇa* of Svāmījī.[32] Thus the three greatest Indians of the twentieth century were all inspired by him. And this has been openly admitted by Arabinda and Gāndhi.

Svāmījī always stressed the fact that the best approach to Hindu mind and one sure to move it was through religion. So he put the organized and devoted service to the masses for their all-round regeneration in intellectual, religious, moral, and material conditions, not as a political programme, but on a religious basis as a means of salvation to every individual in accordance with the neo-Vedānta or practical Vedānta preached by him.

Similarly he put the other important factor of national regeneration—growth of self-confidence and self-reliance and development of physical and moral strength—also on a religious basis. "First of all, our young men must be strong. Religion

[32] Cf. the poem 'Apamān', *Chayanikā*, pp. 420-1.

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will come afterwards. Be strong, my young friends; that is my advice to you. You will be nearer to heaven through football than through the study of the Gita. These are bold words; but I have to say them, for I love you. ... You will understand the Gita better with your biceps, your muscles, a little stronger."[33] "What I want is muscles of iron and nerves of steel, inside which dwells a mind of the same material as that of which the thunderbolt is made. Strength, manhood, *Kashatra-Vīrya, Brahma-Teja.*" "Strength, strength is what the Upanishads speak to me from every page. This is the one great thing to remember, it has been the one great lesson I have been taught in my life; strength, it says, strength, O man, be not weak." "In spite of the greatness of the Upanishads, in spite of our boasted ancestry of sages, compared to many other races, I must tell you that we are weak, very weak. First of all is our physical weakness. That physical weakness is the cause of at least one-third of our miseries. We are lazy, we cannot work. ... What we want is vigour in the blood, strength in the nerves, iron muscles and nerves of steel, not softening namby-pamby ideas."[34] He reminded the Indians again and again of the Vedāntic doctrine that we are all parts of God and therefore divine, and we must therefore shed all fears. The ignorance of this truth through *māyā* or illusion makes us feel that we are weak and powerless. He cited the story of a wolf, brought up from its birth in the company

[33] *C.W.*, III, 242. [34] Ranade, 69, 89, 80.

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of a flock of sheep, which regarded itself as one of them and behaved as such. One day a wolf from the forest fell upon the sheep and saw the baby wolf running in fear along with them. The older wolf tried in vain to convince the baby that it was a wolf and not a sheep, but as soon as they came to the edge of a tank and the baby saw its own image in water, it at once recognised the truth and joined the other. So, said Svāmījī, as soon as we realise that we are really the divine children of immortal bliss, we shall be able to cast our fear and gather strength of mind and body. The following passage may be quoted as a specimen. "Let us proclaim to every soul: 'Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached'. Arise, awake! Awake from this hypnotism of weakness. None is really weak; the soul is infinite, omnipotent, and omniscient. Stand up, assert yourself, proclaim the God within you, do not deny Him! Too much of inactivity, too much of weakness, too much of hypnotism, has been and is upon our race.

"O ye modern Hindus, de-hypnotise yourselves. The way to do that is found in your own sacred books. Teach yourselves, teach everyone his real nature, call upon the sleeping soul and see how it awakes. Power will come, glory will come, goodness will come, purity will come, and everything that is excellent will come, when this sleeping soul is roused to self-conscious activity."[35]

Svāmījī also stressed the fact that this body is merely the garb of the soul which is our real self.

[35] Ibid, 168.

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The body perishes, but the soul is immortal,—nothing can kill it. As a man casts off old tattered garment and puts on a new one, so a man who dies merely changes one body for another, but his soul remains unchanged. There is thus no cause of real fear on earth. It is significant to note how many a revolutionary hero in India fearlessly faced bullet or gallows, not to speak of lesser pain, with these words of Vivekānanda on their lips and engraved on their hearts.

7. *Svāmījī's contribution to the growth of Indian nationalism*

This brings us to the question of Svāmījī's contribution to the growth and development of Indian nationalism. In order to understand this we must lay stress upon certain distinctive features in Svāmījī's conception of nationalism.

First of all is his patriotism or love for India. This is so much evident throughout his writings and speeches that it will suffice to quote only one or two passages.

"India! Wouldst thou attain, by means of thy disgraceful cowardice, that freedom deserved only by the brave and the heroic? Oh India! forget not that the ideal of thy womanhood is Sītā, Sāvitrī, Damayantī; forget not that the God thou worshippest is the great Ascetic of ascetics, the all-renouncing, Śaṅkara, the Lord of Umā; forget not that thy marriage, thy wealth, thy life are not for sense-pleasure, are not for thy individual personal happiness; forget not that thou art born as a

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sacrifice to the *Mother's* altar; forget not that thy social order is but the reflex of the Infinite Universal Motherhood, forget not that the lower classes, the ignorant, the poor, the illiterate, the cobbler, the sweeper are thy flesh and blood, thy brothers. Thou brave one, be bold, take courage, be proud that thou art an Indian, and proudly proclaim: 'I am an Indian, every Indian is my brother'. Say: 'The ignorant Indian, the poor and destitute Indian, the Brahman Indian, the Pariah Indian, is my brother'. Thou, too, clad with but a rag round thy loins proudly proclaim at the top of thy voice: 'The Indian is my brother, the Indian is my life, India's gods and goddesses are my God, India's society is the cradle of my infancy, the pleasure-garden of my youth, the sacred heaven, the Vārāṇasī of my old age'. Say brother, 'The soil of India is my highest heaven, the good of India is my good', and repeat and pray day and night: 'O Thou Lord of Gaurī, O Thou Mother of the Universe, vouchsafe manliness unto me! O Thou Mother of Strength, take away my weakness, take away my unmanliness, and *Make me a Man.*"[36] On the eve of his departure from London, an English friend had asked him, "Swami, how will you like your motherland after three years' experience in the luxurious and powerful West?" His significant reply was: "India I loved before I came away. Now the very dust of India has become holy to me, the very air is now holy to me, it is the holy land, the place of pilgrimage".[37]

[36] *C.W.*, IV. 479-80.

[37] Nikhilananda, 110.

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Though an ascetic, Vivekānanda was a patriot of patriots. The thought of restoring the pristine glory of India by resuscitating among her people the spiritual vitality which was dormant, but not dead, was always the uppermost thought in his mind. His great disciple, Sister Niveditā, who was his constant companion, has remarked : "Throughout those years, in which I saw him almost daily, the thought of India was to him like the air he breathed".

Urged by such an intense feeling of patriotism Svāmījī, though he kept himself aloof from politics, held the ideal of political freedom before his countrymen, specially the young men, as their immediate goal. To a group of young men who met him at Dacca during his tour in 1901, and asked for his advice he said: "Read Bankimchandra and emulate his *deśa-bhakti* (patriotism) and *Santāna dharma* (principles of the heroic band of Sannyāsins as depicted in the *Ānanda-maṭh*). Your duty should be service to motherland. India should be freed politically first".[38] Referring to the policy followed by the Indian National Congress, he told them: "That is not the way to build up Patriotism anywhere. Beggar's bowl has no place in a *Banik's* (merchant's) world of machine, mammon and merchandise. Everything has got to be controlled and directed by the invocation of human conscience, that is *Mahāmāyā's* voice—the latent energy in man. . . . 'First thing first' and body-building and dare-devilry are the

[38] Datta, 334.

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primary concerns before the buoyant young Bengal."[39]

Then Svāmījī observed: "India had a glorious past, India will have a future certainly more majestic. ... The soul-stirring death-defying *Mantram, Abhīh*—fearlessness—will shake off age-long vestiges of slave-mentality, superstition and inferiority complex. In order to march boldly in equal pace side by side with other materially advanced nations of the world—ye, young Bengal, emulate the manly ways of Lakshmī Bāi, the Rani of Jhansi, whose gallantry the English Commander has recognized. ... Imitate the virtues of other nations, cultivate their technical skill and qualities of life. ... And then, with a modern standard of morale and efficiency attained, pay them, the foreign usurpers, in their own coins in your own country to unfasten the alien octopus-hold on the citadel of Oriental Culture. But know it for certain, mere imitation will lead you nowhere."[40]

In his lecture on the "Future of India" he said that we lack unity and fellow-feeling which are the secrets of national greatness. He cited the example of Japan and showed how those two factors enabled compact little nations to rule over huge unwieldy nations. Then he continued:

"And the bigger the nation, the more unwieldy it is. Born, as it were, a disorganised mob, they cannot combine. All these dissensions must stop. ... If one of our countrymen stands up and tries to become great we all try to hold him down, but

[39] Ibid, 332.

[40] Ibid, 333-4.

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if a foreigner comes and tries to kick us, it is all right. We have been used to it, have we not? And slaves must become great Masters! So give up being a slave. *For the next fifty years this alone shall be our keynote,—this, our great Mother India.* Let all other vain gods disappear for the time from our minds. This is the only god that is awake, our own race".[41]

Svāmījī pointed out that disunion and jealousy of each other have been the greatest defects in our national life. Here are his denunciations. "We cannot combine, we do not love each other; we are intensely selfish, not three of us can come together without hating each other, without being jealous of each other."[42] "Why should the *Hindu nation* with all its wonderful intelligence and other things have gone to pieces? I would answer you, *Jealousy*. Never were there people more wretchedly jealous of one another, more envious of one another's fame and name than this wretched Hindu race. And if you ever come out in the West, the absence of this is the first feeling which you will see in the Western nations.[43] "Why is it, to take a case in point, that forty millions of Englishmen rule three hundred millions of people here? What is the psychological explanation? These forty millions put their wills together and that means infinite power, and you three hundred millions have a will each separate from the other. Therefore to make a great future India, the whole

[41] *Lectures*, 108-9; *C.W.*, III. 300. Italics mine.
[42] Ranade, 81. [43] Ibid, 82.

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secret lies in organisation, accumulation of power, co-ordination of wills."[44]

According to Svāmījī true nationalism in India can only be based on unity of religion. "The problems in India are more complicated, more momentous, than the problems in any other country. Race, religion, language, government—all these together make a nation. The one common ground that we have is our sacred tradition, our religion. That is the only common ground, and upon that we shall have to build. In Europe, political ideas form the national unity.

"The unity in religion, therefore, is absolutely necessary as the first condition of the future of India. *There must be the recognition of one religion throughout the length and breadth of this land.* What do I mean by one religion? Not in the sense of one religion as held among the Christians, or the Mohammedans, or the Buddhists. . . . We know that our religion has certain common grounds, common to all our sects, however varying their conclusions may be, however different their claims may be. So there are certain common grounds; and within their limitations this religion of ours admits of a marvellous variation, an infinite amount of liberty to think and live our own lives."[45]

"It is not only true that the ideal of religion is the highest ideal in the case of India, it is the only possible means of work; work in any other line, without first strengthening this, would be disas-

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid, 83.

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trous. Therefore, the first plank in the making of a future India, the first step that is to be hewn out of that rock of ages, is the unification of religion."[46]

"National union in India must be a gathering up of its scattered spiritual forces. A Nation in India must be a union of those whose hearts beat to the same spiritual tune."[47]

Thus the ideal of nationalism preached by Svāmījī was based on the four solid rocks of

(1) The awakening of the masses who form the basis of the nation.
(2) Development of physical and moral strength.
(3) Unity based on common spiritual ideas.
(4) Consciousness of, and pride in, the ancient glory and greatness of India.

These were the four pillars on which, according to Svāmījī, Indian nationality must rest, and it can be hardly denied that he was the first who clearly emphasised these ideas and directly contributed, perhaps more than anybody else, to sow the seeds of national development on this line. How his phenomenal success in America indirectly contributed to the same end has already been mentioned. Two facts are specially noteworthy. At the very moment when Svāmījī regarded the upliftment of the masses as the chief item in national regeneration, not only the Indian politicians generally, but even advanced national leaders like B. C. Pal, were scared by the very idea of the masses being drawn into politics, as that would lead to anarchy and

[46] Ibid, 83-4. [47] Ibid, 84.

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revolution.[47a] In the second place, when our political leaders regarded meetings and petition to the British rulers as the only way of India's emancipation, Svāmījī raised his voice against this policy of begging-bowl. In both these respects he anticipated the line of future political progress in India, which was largely the result of his own stirring exhortations.

8. *Svāmījī, the Prophet of the New Age*

Svāmījī was not only an ardent nationalist, but he was also a great internationalist and humanitarian. He had a clear vision of the future of Western Civilisation. During his first visit to Europe he had visions of the coming war and consequent cataclysm. "Europe," he wrote, as early as 1895, "is on the edge of a volcano. If the fire is not extinguished by a flood of spirituality, it will erupt".[48] It was, in the opinion of Svāmījī, the great task of India to save the Western culture by propagating spiritual knowledge. But he knew that the West would never deign to take lessons from a subject country. Freedom of India was, therefore, a necessary step for the humanitarian and international role that India was fit and destined to play in the world. Unlike some other great sons of India he did not decry nationalism as an ideal as compared with humanism, but he regarded the two as complementary to, or rather essentially bound up with, each other. Svāmījī had almost a prophetic vision of the future.

[47a] Pal, Memoirs, II, 48-52.

[48] Nikhilananda, 163-4.

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"Europe", he remarked, "is a vast military camp."[49] Not only did he foresee the cataclysm of Europe, but he also predicted, long in advance, the rise of communism. As early as 1896 he made the following observation to Sister Christina Grinstidle: "The next upheaval that is to usher in another era, will come from Russia or from China. I cannot see clearly which but it will be either the one or the other". And again, "The world is in the third epoch under the domination of Vaishya (the merchant, the third estate). The fourth epoch will be under that of the Sudra,"[50] which would be equivalent to the proletariat or the exploited masses. On another occasion he said: "Yet a time will come, when there will be the rising of the Sudra class with their Sudra-hood . . . will gain absolute supremacy in every society".[51]

The Svāmī thus described very accurately the three successive stages in the history of the world dominated by the Church, the military, and the merchants, corresponding respectively to the three castes in India, namely Brāhmaṇas, Kshatriyas and Vaiśyas, and then visualised the rise of the toiling and exploited masses corresponding to the Śūdra caste in India. We see today the fulfilment of this prophecy—in Russia and China, the very countries named by Svāmījī. To the young men who saw him in Dacca he said something more, as the following memoir by one of them will show: "In the course of further talk, the prophet in Svāmījī said, as if lost in a soliloquy: 'Yes, the

[49] Ibid, 163. [50] Datta, 13. [51] Ibid, 12.

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Sudras of the world will rise. And that is the dictate of Social Dynamic that is *Sivam*. It is as clear as day-light that the entire Orient will have a resurrection to build anew a human world. Lo! the future greatness of China, and in the wake of it, of all the Asiatic nations'. With humble submission I asked, how he could visualize that. The prophet roared in assertion: 'Don't you see, I can see, through the veil, the shadow of coming events of the world. By God's grace it has descended on me, this insight of mine, through years of close observation, study and travel that is *sadhana*. As the astronomers see the movements of the stars through telescope, likewise the movement of the world falls within the range of my vision. You take it from me, this rising of the Sūdras will take place first in Russia, and then in China; India will rise next and will play a vital role in shaping the future world".[52]

It is legitimate to conclude that this knowledge of the future role to be played by the Śūdras was an additional incentive to Svāmījī to lay so much emphasis for the upliftment of the masses, both to prepare them for their future status and to ensure that they might be worthy of playing their part for the benefit of the country at large.

9. *Synthesis of Svāmījī*

In conclusion, the fact must be stressed that Svāmī Vivekānanda played a distinct role in the evolution of Indian culture in the twentieth cen-

[52] Ibid, 334-35.

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tury. As has been mentioned above, the nineteenth century began with a strong reforming zeal in Bengal under the inspiration of Rammohan Roy. It was sustained and accelerated by the impact of Western culture through the progress of English education. The Brāhma Samāj, which was the first fruit of the rational spirit of reform, soon outstripped all limits and ended by cutting itself adrift from the Hindu society. At the same time, a large section of the English educated classes, dazzled by the power and progress of the Western countries, rushed headlong to imbibe and imitate the West even in minute details, leaving, like a tattered garment, the ideas, beliefs, and traditions of old to which they attributed all the ills from which they had been suffering. But the old culture of India refused to yield without a struggle. Shortly, there arose a band of defenders, as much intoxicated with the old wine of Indian culture, as they understood it, as their opponents were with the new wine of the West. The former denounced everything Western with as much vehemence as the latter had shown in decrying their old culture, and surrounded with a halo of sanctity everything in Hindu society, including all its crying evils. Their own culture, they said, could give them all they needed, and they had nothing to learn from the West even in intellectual and material, not to speak of moral and spiritual, spheres of life. Vivekānanda himself referred to these two conflicting views in the following words: "On one side, New India is saying, 'If we only adopt Western

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ideas, Western language, Western food, Western dress and Western manners, we shall be as strong and powerful as the Western nations.' On the other, Old India is saying, 'Fools! by imitation, other's ideas never become one's own—nothing, unless earned, is your own. Does the ass in the lion's skin become the lion?' On oue side, New India is saying; 'What the Western nations do is surely good, otherwise how did they become so great?' On the other side, Old India is saying; "The flash of lightning is intensely bright, but only for a moment; look out, boys, it is dazzling your eyes. Beware!"[53] When Vivekānanda began his active life, India was at a cross-road, faced by these two diametrically opposite ideals, so bewildering to a common man. In the language of Hegelian dialectics they represented the Thesis and Anti-thesis, while Vivekānanda stepped in to supply the synthesis. He bluntly told the Indians that we must learn science and technology from the West in order to improve our material resources. Failure to keep up with the advanced knowledge of the West has been the main cause of our ruin. Spirituality does not long survive the impoverishment of material resources and consequent loss of physical and mental vigour. At the same time he denounced many customs and superstitions of the Hindus in the strongest language. Here are a few passages which can be multiplied to any extent. "Those whose heads have a tendency to be troubled day and night over such questions as whether the

[53] *C.W.*, IV. 177.

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bell should ring on the right or on the left, whether the sandal-paste mark should be put on the head or anywhere else, whether the light should be waved twice or four times—simply deserve the name of wretches."[54] "Think of the last six hundred or seven hundred years of degradation, when grown-up men by the hundreds have been discussing for years whether we should drink a glass of water with the right hand or the left, whether the hand should be washed three times or four times, whether we should gargle five or six times. What can you expect from men who pass their lives in discussing such momentous questions as these, and writing most learned philosophies on them![55] "If a potato happens to touch a brinjal, how long will the universe last before it is deluged?" "If they do not apply earth a dozen times to clean their hands, will fourteen generations of ancestors go to hell, or twenty-four?" "For intricate problems like these they have been finding out scientific explanations for the last two thousand years—while one-fourth of the people are starving."[56]

"A girl of eight is married to a man of thirty and the parents are jubilant over it. And if any one protests against it, the plea is put forward, 'Our religion is being overturned'. What sort of religion have they who want to see their girls becoming mothers before they attain puberty even, and offer scientific explanations for it? Many,

[54] Ranade, 77.
[55] *C.W.*, III. 167.
[56] Ranade, 78.

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again, lay the blame at the door of the Mohammedans. They are to blame, indeed."[57]

"There is the man today who after drinking the cup of Western wisdom, thinks that he knows everything. He laughs at the ancient sages. All Hindu thought to him is arrant trash—philosophy mere child's prattle, and religion the superstition of fools. On the other hand, there is the man educated, but a sort of monomaniac, who runs to the other extreme, and wants to explain the omen of this and that. He has philosophical and metaphysical, and Lord knows what other puerile explanations for every superstition that belongs to his peculiar race, or his peculiar gods, or his peculiar village. Every little village superstition is to him a mandate of the Vedas, and upon the carrying out of it, according to him, depends the national life."[58] "The West is groaning under the tyranny of the Shylocks, and the East is groaning under the tyranny of the priests: each must keep the other in check. Do not think that one alone is to help the world".[59]

After these outbursts against both, Vivekānanda concludes: "We have to find our way between the Scylla of old superstitious orthodoxy, and the Charybdis of materialism—of Europeanism. . . ."[60]

10. *Svāmījī's Ideal of Reforms*

And he did find the way, which we have referred to as the Synthesis. His scattered suggestions on

[57] Ibid, 78.
[58] Ibid, 78-9.
[59] *Lectures*, 31; *C.W.*, III. 158.
[60] Ranade, 78.

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reforms in various departments of Indian life show that he was in favour of ruthlessly removing those evils in religious thought and practice, social theories and customs, principles and method of education, attitude towards women and low castes etc., which are not in accordance with, and hinder the growth of, spiritual life according to the doctrine of Vedānta; for spirituality is the lodestar of Indian culture to which we must always look for direction. This is the yard-stick for measuring the extent of reforms, and the compass needle for determining their direction.

It is beyond the scope of the present lecture to discuss his suggested reforms in detail. We may briefly refer to his views on the position of women, caste-system and the system of education as prevailing in his days.

a. *Women*

"In India", said Svāmījī, "there are two great evils: Trampling on the women, and grinding the poor through caste restrictions". He therefore held that the "uplift of the women, the awakening of the masses, must come first, and then only can any real good come about for the country, for India".[61] In this matter again, he sometimes burst forth. Here is a specimen: "We are horrible sinners, and our degradation is due to our calling women 'despicable worms', 'gateways to hell', and so forth. Goodness gracious! There is all the difference between Heaven and Hell".[62] Here, again,

[61] *Cent. Vol.*, 400. [62] Ibid, 401.

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Svāmījī relied on the Vedāntic doctrine of the divinity of man and therefore, also, of the equality of men and women. "When you will realise that all-illuminating truth of the *Ātman*, then you will see that the idea of sex-discrimination has vanished altogether, then only will you look upon all women as the veritable manifestation of *Brahman*".[63] Though Svāmījī was fully conscious of the degraded condition of women in his days, he ascribed it mainly to the lack of education. He therefore thought that our duty was restricted to giving education to women and freedom to choose their own way.

Svāmījī held Sītā as an ideal woman, but would not impose any ideal on the educated women, leaving them to make their own decisions. The following passages clearly bring out his views: "With such an education women will solve their own problems. They have all the time been trained in helpless, servile dependence on others, and so they are good only to weep at the slightest approach of a mishap or danger. Along with other things, they should acquire the spirit of valour and heroism. In the present day it has become necessary for them also to learn self-defence. See, how grand was the Queen of Jhansi !"[64] "Liberty is the first condition of growth. It is wrong, a thousand times wrong, if any one of you dares to say, 'I will work out the salvation of this woman or child'. I am asked again and again, what I think of the widow

[63] Ibid, 402. [64] Ibid, 405.

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problem and what I think of the woman question. Let me answer once for all—Am I a widow, that you ask me that nonsense? Am I a woman, that you ask me that question again and again? Who are you to solve women's problem? Are you the Lord God that you should rule over widow and every woman? Hands off: They will solve their own problems".[65]

b *Education*

This brings us to Svāmījī's view on education. He held that "Education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and runs riot there, undigested, all your life. We must have life-building, man-making, character-making assimilation of ideas. If you have assimilated five ideas and made them your life and character, you have more education than any man who has got by heart a whole library."[66] He condemned the existing system of education; because, though it had some good points, it was not a man-making education, but merely and entirely a negative education. Besides, true to his conception of the fundamental basis of Indian culture, he regarded secular knowledge without spiritual ideas as not of much value. "I look upon religion as the innermost core of education. Mind, I do not mean my own or anybody else's opinion about religion."[67] Svāmījī stressed the comprehensive nature of education. It should aim at character-building, physical culture,

[65] *C.W.*, III. 246.
[66] *Cent. Vol.*, 474.
[67] *C.W.*, IV. 232.

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cultivation of arts, study of humanities with special reference to Indian culture, and scientific and technological training. He insisted upon chastity and personal contact of a good teacher as essential for good education. The education of women, too, should lay special emphasis upon chastity and fearlessness. Svāmījī conceived an ideal educational institution for women as a *maṭh*, with a school attached to it. The curricula would include religious scriptures, literature (including Sanskrit and English), and also such subjects as sewing, culinary arts, domestic work, and upbringing of children. Worship and meditation shall be a regular feature of student life.

The whole idea of education was summed up by Svāmījī as "the manifestation of divinity in man". "You cannot teach a child any more than you can grow a plant. All you can do is on the negative side—you can only help. You can take away the obstacles, but knowledge comes out of its own nature. Loosen the soil a little, so that it may come out easily. Put a hedge round it, see that it is not killed by anything, and there your work stops. You cannot do anything else. The rest is a manifestation from within its own nature".[68]

The recent trend in educational ideas in India shows that Svāmījī's message has not been lost upon her.

c. *Caste System*

As regards the caste system Svāmījī points out

[68] *Cent. Vol.*, 474.

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that social groupings, which form the basis of Indian caste system, are found everywhere in the world, even in Europe. But there is a vital difference. "In every other country, the highest honour belongs to the Kshatriya—the man of the sword. In India, the highest honour belongs to the man of peace—the *Shramana* or the *Brāhmana,* the man of God".[69] "It (the institution of caste) puts, theoretically at least, the whole of India under the guidance—not of wealth, nor the sword —but of intellect,—intellect, chastened and controlled by spirituality".[70] "Caste is a natural order; I can perform one duty in social life, and you another; you can govern a country and I can mend a pair of old shoes, but that is no reason why you are greater than I, for can you mend my shoes? Can I govern the country? I am clever in mending shoes, you are clever in reading the Vedas, but that is no reason why you should trample on my head".[71] "Now, the original idea of *Jāti* (caste) was this freedom of the individual to express his nature, his *Prakṛiti*".[72] "Then what was the cause of India's downfall—the giving up of this idea of caste. Therefore, what I have to tell you my countrymen is this: That India fell because you prevented and abolished caste".[73]

What Svāmījī means is that the modern rigid system of caste distinctions, involving inequality, is very different from its old flexible form, and this transformation was the cause of the downfall of

[69] Ibid., 365. [70] Ibid. [71] *C.W.*, III. 245.
[72] *Cent. Vol.*, 369. [73] Ibid.

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India. He also holds the priests responsible for it. "It is in the books written by the priests", says he, "that madnesses like that of caste are to be found; and not in books revealed from God".[74] Then he continues: "But in spite of all the ravings of the priests, caste is simply a crystallised social institution, which, after doing its service, is now filling the atmosphere of India with stench; and it can only be removed by giving back to the people their lost social individuality".[75] He puts his finger on the evils of modern caste when he says, "the idea of caste is the greatest dividing factor,"[76] "modern caste distinction is a barrier to India's progress. It narrows, restricts, separates!" But then he hoped that "it will crumble before the advance of ideas."[77] Signs are not wanting that his prophecy is on the way to fulfilment at no distant date. Svāmījī did not recommend the total abolition of caste, but suggested its readjustment according to modern conditions, as would appear from the following passages: "From the time of the Upanishads down to the present day, nearly all our great Teachers have wanted to break through the barriers of caste, i.e., caste in its degenerated state, not the original system. What little good you see in the present caste clings to it from the original caste, which was the most glorious social institution".[78]

"Castes should not go; but, should only be readjusted—accordingly. Within the old structure

[74] *C.W.*, VI. 394.
[75] *C.W.*, V. 22-3.
[76] *C.W.*, VI. 394.
[77] *Cent. Vol.*, 371.
[78] Ibid., 376.

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is to be found life enough for the re-building of two hundred thousand new ones. It is sheer nonsense to desire the abolition of caste. The new method is—evolution of the old".[79]

It goes without saying that Svāmījī's thunder burst forth on the untouchability, specially prevalent in South India. Referring to it Svāmījī said: "Was there ever a sillier thing before in the world than what I saw in the Malabar country? ... What inference would you draw except that these Malabaris are all lunatics; their homes, so many lunatic asylums, and that they are to be treated with derision by every race in India, until they mend their manners and know better. Shame upon them, that such wicked and diabolical customs are allowed."[80]

"India's doom was sealed the very day they invented the word *Mleccha* and stopped from communion with others".[81]

"Do you mean to say that I am born to live and die as one of those caste-ridden, superstitious, merciless, hypocritical, atheistic cowards that you find only amongst the educated Hindus?"[82] "You Hindus have no religion. Your God is in the kitchen, your Bible is the cooking-pot. ... People have given up the Vedas and all your Philosophy is in the kitchen. The Religion of India at present is "Don't Touchism". The present Hinduism is a degradation".[83]

It is surprising to see Svāmījī, defender of the Hindu faith, using such strong language. But

[79] Ibid. [80] *C.W.*, III. 294-5. [81] *C.W.*, V. 52.
[82] Ibid. [83] Ibid.

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sometimes he went even further. Here are a few more passages: "There is a danger of our Religion getting into the kitchens. We are neither Vedantists, most of us now, nor Pauranics, nor Tantrics. We are just 'Don't-touchists'. Our Religion is in the kitchen. Our God is the cooking-pot and our Religion is 'Don't touch me, I am holy'. If this goes on for another century, every one of us will be in a lunatic asylum".[84]

"Do you think our Religion is worth the name? Ours is only Don't Touchism, only 'touch me not, touch me not'. Good Heavens: A country, the big leaders of which have for the last two thousand years been only discussing whether to take food with the right hand or the left, whether to take water from the right side or the left—if such a country does not go to ruins, what other will? ... A country, where millions of people live on the flower of the Mohua plant, and a million or two of Sadhus, and a hundred million or so of Brahmanas suck the blood of these poor people, without even the least effort for their amelioration—is that a country or a hell? Is that a Religion or the Devil's dance"?

"Don't-touchism is a form of mental disease"

"Kick such customs out".

"The whole truth of austerities and spiritual exercises is, in a nutshell, that I am pure, and all the rest are impure: A beastly, demoniac, hellish religion is this".[85]

The fact is that he sought to revive the core and

[84] *C.W.*, III. 167. [85] Ibid, 374-5.

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the essential spirit of Hinduism after rooting out the evil outgrowths that practically killed it.

11. *Synthesis between Old and New—the East and the West*

This was the great role played by Vivekānanda in the evolution of Modern India. He did not altogether discard the old nor deny the merit of the new, but pointed out the synthesis between the two. He heralded a new era of national regeneration in India by removing the evils and imperfections of each and assimilating the good qualities and virtues of both. In other words, the conflict between the thesis represented by the Anglican Reformists, and the anti-thesis represented by the reactionary orthodox Hindus was resolved by the synthesis propounded by Svāmī Vivekānanda, which has been accepted as the basis for the evolution of Modern India.

As Svāmījī worked for a synthesis between two opposing forces in India, he did the same between the opposite ideals of the East and the West. If he stressed the need for an all-round development of the Indians by imbibing both the spirituality of of ancient India and the material culture of the West, he also regarded the same combination as equally necessary for the West. We require the knowledge of science and technology as much or as badly as the West needs the spiritual culture. The divorce between the two brought about India's downfall, and, he prophesied, if the West neglects spirituality and goes on developing the scientific

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knowledge alone, the unchecked growth of that very knowledge would bring about its destruction. The last two World Wars and the recent race for inventing more and more powerful nuclear weapons have proved to the hilt the truth of Svāmījī's prophecy made more than half a century ago.

Svāmījī's prophecy has also a great moral value for us. It taught us for the first time that we Indians need not suffer from an inferiority complex in respect of Western civilization. If that civilization possesses today superiority to Indian culture in material progress and may help India to attain the same, India does not ask for it with a beggar's bowl. She offers in return something without which the material greatness of the West will soon be laid to dust. So it is a policy of give and take, and India can hold her head high before the whole world as she is in no way inferior to the West in the scale of real values. Svāmījī, by proclaiming this great truth, laid the basis of Indian nationalism on a solid foundation.

Svāmījī looked upon the propagation of spiritual teaching in the West as the great task now before India. He laid the foundations of this humanitarian work in America. But he knew that India cannot play an effective role in this direction so long as she occupies only the status of a subject country. Free India should now take up the task which Vivekānanda had begun, and should build upon the foundations so well and truly laid by him.

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APPENDIX I

English Poems of Svāmījī

A. KALI THE MOTHER

The stars are blotted out,
    The clouds are covering clouds,
It is darkness vibrant, sonant.
    In the roaring, whirling wind
Are the souls of a million lunatics
    Just loose from prison-house,
Wrenching trees by the roots,
    Sweeping all from the path.
The sea has joined the fray,
    And swirls up mountain-waves,
To reach the pitchy sky,
    The flash of lurid light
Reveals on every side
    A thousand, thousand shades
Of Death begrimed and black—
    Scattering plagues and sorrows,
Dancing mad with joy.
    Come, Mother, come!
For Terror is Thy name,
    Death is in Thy breath,
And every shaking step
    Destroys a world for e'er.
Thou 'Time', the All-Destroyer!
    Come, O Mother, come!
Who dares misery love,
    And hug the form of Death,
Dance in Destruction's dance,
    To him the Mother comes.

(*C.W., IV. 384*)

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B. THE SONG OF THE SANNYASIN

Wake up the note! the song that had its birth
Far off, where worldly taint could never reach,
In mountain caves, and glades of forest deep,
Whose calm no sigh for lust or wealth or fame
Could ever dare to break; where rolled the stream
Of knowledge, truth, and bliss that follows both.
Sing high that note, Sannyasin bold! Say—
"Om Tat Sat, Om!"

Strike off thy fetters! Bonds that bind thee down,
Of shining gold or darker, baser ore,
Love, hate—good, bad—and all the dual throng.
Know, slave is slave, caressed or whipped, not free;
For fetters though of gold, are not less strong to bind;
Then, off with them, Sannyasin bold! Say—
"Om Tat Sat, Om!"

Let darkness go; the will-o'-the-wisp that leads
With blinking light to pile more gloom on gloom.
This thirst for life, for ever quench; it drags
From birth to death, and death to birth, the soul.
He conquers all who conquers self. Know this
And never yield, Sannyasin bold! Say—
"Om Tat Sat, Om!"

"Who sows must reap," they say, "and cause must bring
The sure effect; good, good; bad, bad; and none
Escape the law. But whoso wears a form
Must wear the chain". Too true; but far beyond
Both name and form is Atman, ever free.
Know thou art That, Sannyasin bold! Say—
"Om Tat Sat, Om!"

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They know no truth, who dream such vacant dreams
As father, mother, children, wife and friend,
The sexless Self! whose father He? whose child?
Whose friend, whose foe is He who is but One?
The Self is all in all, none else exists;
And thou art That, Sannyasin bold! Say—
"Om Tat Sat, Om!"

There is but One—the Free—the Knower—Self!
Without a name, without a form or stain.
In Him is Maya, dreaming all this dream.
The Witness, He appears as nature, soul.
Know thou art That, Sannyasin bold! Say—
"Om Tat Sat, Om!"

Where seekest thou? That freedom, friend, this world
Nor that can give. In books and temples vain
Thy search. Thine only is the hand that holds
The rope that drags thee on. Then cease lament,
Let go thy hold, Sannyasin bold! Say—
"Om Tat Sat, Om!"

Say, "Peace to all: From me no danger be
To aught that lives. In those that dwell on high,
In those that lowly creep, I am the Self in all!
All life both here and there, do I renounce,
All heavens and earths and hells, all hopes and fears."
Thus cut thy bonds, Sannyasin bold! Say—
"Om Tat Sat, Om!"

Heed then no more how body lives or goes.
Its task is done. Let Karma float it down;
Let one put garlands on, another kick
This frame; say naught. No praise or blame can be
Where praiser praised, and blamer blamed are—one.
Thus be thou calm, Sannyasin bold! Say—
"Om Tat Sat, Om!"

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Truth never comes where lust and fame and greed
Of gain reside. No man who thinks of woman
As his wife can ever perfect be;
Nor he who owns the least of things, nor he
Whom anger chains, can ever pass thro' Maya's gates;
So, give these up, Sannyasin bold! Say—
"Om Tat Sat, Om!"

Have thou no home. What home can hold thee, friend?
The sky thy roof; the grass thy bed; and food
What chance may bring, well cooked or ill, judge not.
No food or drink can taint that noble Self
Which knows Itself. Like rolling river free
Thou ever be, Sannyasin bold! Say—
"Om Tat Sat, Om!"

Few only know the truth. The rest will hate
And laugh at thee, great one; but pay no heed.
Go thou, the free, from place to place, and help
Them out of darkness, Maya's veil. Without
The fear of pain or search for pleasure, go
Beyond them both, Sannyasin bold! Say—
"Om Tat Sat, Om!"

Thus, day by day, till Karma's powers spent
Release the soul for ever. No more is birth,
Nor I, nor thou, nor God, nor man. The "I"
Has All become, the All is "I" and Bliss.
Know thou art That, Sannyasin bold! Say—
"Om Tat Sat, Om!"

(*C.W., IV. 392*)

C. MY PLAY IS DONE

Ever rising, ever falling with the waves of time,
still rolling on I go
From fleeting scene to scene ephemeral,
with life's currents' ebb and flow.

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Oh! I am sick of this unending force;
these shows they please no more.
This ever running, never reaching,
nor e'en a distant glimpse of shore!
From life to life I'm waiting at the gates,
alas, they open not.
Dim are my eyes with vain attempt
to catch one ray long sought.
On little life's high, narrow bridge
I stand and see below
The struggling, crying, laughing throng.
For what? No one can know.
In front yon gates stand frowning dark,
and say: "No farther way,
This is the limit; tempt not Fate,
bear it as best you may;
Go, mix with them and drink this cup
and be as mad as they.
Who dares to know but comes to grief;
stop then, and with them stay."
Alas for me, I cannot rest.
This floating bubble, earth—
Its hollow form, its hollow name,
its hollow death and birth—
For me is nothing. How I long
to get beyond the crust
Of name and form! Ah! ope the gates:
to me they open must.
Open the gates of light, O Mother,
to me Thy tired son.
I long, oh, long to return home!
Mother, my play is done.
You sent me out in the dark to play,
and wore a frightful mask;
Then hope departed, terror came,
and play became a task.

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Tossed to and fro, from wave to wave
in this seething surging sea
Of passions strong and sorrows deep,
grief *is*, and joy *to be*.
Where life is living death, alas! and death—
who knows but 'tis
Another start, another round of this old wheel
of grief and bliss?
Where children dream bright, golden dreams,
too soon to find them dust,
And aye look back to hope long lost
and life a mass of rust!
Too late, the knowledge age doth gain;
scarce from the wheel we're gone
When fresh, young lives put their strength
to the wheel, which thus goes on
From day to day and year to year.
'Tis but delusion's toy,
False hope its motor; desire, nave;
its spokes are grief and joy.
I go adrift and know not whither.
Save me from this fire!
Rescue me, merciful Mother,
from floating with desire!
Turn not to me Thy awful face,
'tis more than I can bear.
Be merciful and kind to me,
to chide my faults forbear.
Take me, O Mother, to those shores
where strifes for ever cease;
Beyond all sorrows, beyond tears,
beyond e'en earthly bliss;
Whose glory neither sun, nor moon,
nor stars that twinkle bright,
Nor flash of lightning can express.
They but reflect its light.

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Let never more delusive dreams
veil off Thy face from me.
My play is done, O Mother,
break my chains and make me free!

(*C.W., VI. 175*)

D. TO THE AWAKENED INDIA

Once more awake!
For sleep it was, not death, to bring thee life
Anew and rest to lotus-eyes for visions
Daring yet. The world in need awaits, O Truth!
No death for thee!

Resume thy march,
With gentle feet that would not break the
Peaceful rest, even of the road-side dust
That lies so low. Yet strong and steady,
Blissful, bold and free. Awakener, ever
Forward! Speak thy stirring words.

Thy home is gone,
Where loving hearts had brought thee up, and
Watched with joy thy growth. But Fate is strong—
This is the law—all things come back to the source
They sprung, their strength to renew.

Then start afresh
From the land of thy birth, where vast cloud-belted
Snows do bless and put their strength in thee,
For working wonders new. The heavenly
River tune thy voice to her own immortal song;
Deodar shades give thee eternal peace.

And all above,
Himala's daughter Uma, gentle, pure,
The Mother that resides in all as Power

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And Life, who works all works, and
Makes of One the world, whose mercy
Opes the gate to Truth and shows
The One in All, give thee untiring
Strength, which is Infinite Love.

They bless thee all,
The seers great, whom age nor clime
Can claim their own, the fathers of the
Race, who felt the heart of Truth the same,
And bravely taught to man ill-voiced or
Well. Their servant, thou hast got
The secret—'tis but One.

Then speak, O Love!—
Before thy gentle voice serene, behold how
Visions melt, and fold on fold of dreams
Departs to void, till Truth and Truth alone,
In all its glory shines—

And tell the world—
Awake, arise, and dream no more!
This is the land of dreams, where Karma
Weaves unthreaded garlands with our thoughts
Of flowers sweet or noxious, and none
Has root or stem, being born in naught, which
The softest breath of Truth drives back to
Primal nothingness. Be bold, and face
The Truth! Be one with it! Let visions cease,
Or, if you cannot, dream but truer dreams,
Which are Eternal Love and Service Free.

(*C.W.*, *IV*. 387).

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E. HOLD ON YET A WHILE, BRAVE HEART

(Written to the Maharaja of Khetri.)

If the sun by the cloud is hidden a bit,
If the welkin shows but gloom,
Still hold on yet a while, brave heart,
The victory is sure to come.

No winter was but summer came behind,
Each hollow crests the wave,
They push each other in light and shade;
Be steady then and brave.

The duties of life are sore indeed.
And its pleasures fleeting, vain,
The goal so shadowy seems and dim,
Yet plod on through the dark, brave heart,
With all thy might and main.

Not a work will be lost, no struggle vain,
Though hopes be blighted, powers gone;
Of thy loins shall come the heirs to all,
Then hold on yet a while, brave soul,
No good is e'er undone.

Though the good and the wise in life are few.
Yet theirs are the reins to lead,
The masses know but late the worth;
Heed none and gently guide.

With thee are those who see afar,
With thee is the Lord of might,
All blessings pour on thee, great soul,
To thee may all come right!

(*C.W., IV. 389*).

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F. AN INTERESTING CORRESPONDENCE

(Letter to Mary Hale, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Hale.)

Now Sister Mary,
You need not be sorry
For the hard raps I gave you,
You know full well,
Though you like me tell,
With my whole heart I love you.

* * *

Nor angel I, nor man nor brute,
Nor body, mind, nor he or she,
The books do stop in wonder mute
To tell my nature; I am He.

Before the sun, the moon, the earth,
Before the stars or comets free,
Before e'en time has had its birth,
I was, I am, and I will be.

(*C.W., VIII. 162-3*)

G. THE CUP

This is your cup—the cup assigned
To you from the beginning.
Nay, My child, I know how much
Of that dark drink is your own brew
Of fault and passion, ages long ago,
In the deep years of yesterday, I know.

This is your road—a painful road and drear.
I made the stones that never give you rest.
I set your friend in pleasant ways and clear,
And he shall come like you, unto My breast.
But you, My child, must travel here.

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This is your task. It has no joy nor grace,
But it is not meant for any other hand,
And in My universe hath measured place,
Take it. I do not bid you understand.
I bid you close your eyes to see My face.

(*C.W., VI. 177*).

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APPENDIX II

The Bengali Prose writings of Svāmī Vivekānanda

১। আমাদের দেশে প্রাচীন কাল থেকে সংস্কৃতর সমস্ত বিদ্যা থাকার দরুণ, বিদ্বান এবং সাধারণের মধ্যে একটা অপার সমুদ্র দাঁড়িয়ে গেছে। বুদ্ধ থেকে চৈতন্য রামকৃষ্ণ পর্যন্ত—যাঁরা 'লোকহিতায়' এসেছেন, তাঁরা সকলেই সাধারণ লোকের ভাষায় সাধারণকে শিক্ষা দিয়েছেন। পাণ্ডিত্য অবশ্য উৎকৃষ্ট; কিন্তু কটমট ভাষা—যা অপ্রাকৃতিক, কল্পিত মাত্র, তাতে ছাড়া কি আর পাণ্ডিত্য হয় না? চলিত ভাষায় কি আর শিল্প-নৈপুণ্য হয় না? স্বাভাবিক ভাষা ছেড়ে একটা অস্বাভাবিক ভাষা তয়ের ক'রে কি হবে? যে ভাষায় ঘরে কথা কও, তাতেই তো সমস্ত পাণ্ডিত্য গবেষণা মনে মনে কর; তবে লেখবার বেলা ও-একটা কি কিম্ভূতকিমাকার উপস্থিত কর? যে ভাষায় নিজের মনে দর্শন-বিজ্ঞান চিন্তা কর, দশজনে বিচার কর—সে ভাষা কি দর্শন-বিজ্ঞান লেখবার ভাষা নয়? যদি না হয় তো নিজের মনে এবং পাঁচজনে ও-সকল তত্ত্ববিচার কেমন ক'রে কর? স্বাভাবিক যে ভাষায় মনের ভাব আমরা প্রকাশ করি, যে ভাষায় ক্রোধ দুঃখ ভালবাসা ইত্যাদি জানাই, তার চেয়ে উপযুক্ত ভাষা হ'তে পারেই না; সেই ভাব, সেই ভঙ্গি, সেই সমস্ত ব্যবহার ক'রে যেতে হবে। ও ভাষার যেমন জোর, যেমন অল্পের মধ্যে অনেক, যেমন যে-দিকে ফেরাও সে-দিকে ফেরে, তেমন তেমন কোন তৈরী ভাষা কোনও কালে হবে না। ভাষাকে করতে হবে—যেন সাফ্ ইস্পাত, মুচড়ে মুচড়ে যা ইচ্ছে কর—আবার যে-কে-সেই, এক চোটে পাথর কেটে দেয়, দাঁত পড়ে না। আমাদের ভাষা—সংস্কৃতর গদাই-লস্করি চাল—ঐ একচাল নকল ক'রে অস্বাভাবিক হ'য়ে যাচ্ছে। ভাষা হচ্ছে উন্নতির প্রধান উপায়, লক্ষণ। —ভাববার কথা, পৃঃ ৯-১০।

২। সনাতন হিন্দুধর্মের গগনস্পর্শী মন্দির—সে মন্দিরে নিয়ে যাবার রাস্তাই বা কত! আর সেথা নাই বা কি? বেদান্তীর নির্গুণ

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ব্রহ্ম হ'তে ব্রহ্মা, বিষ্ণু, শিব, শক্তি, সূর্য্যমামা, ইঁদুরচড়া গণেশ, আর কুচোদেবতা ষষ্ঠী, মাকাল প্রভৃতি,—নাই কি? আর বেদ-বেদান্ত দর্শন পুরাণ তন্ত্রে তো ঢের মাল আছে, যার এক-একটা কথায় ভববন্ধন টুটে যায়। আর লোকেরই বা ভিড় কি, তেত্রিশ কোটি লোক সে দিকে দৌড়েছে। আমারও কৌতূহল হ'ল, আমিও ছুটলুম। কিন্তু গিয়ে দেখি, এ কি কাণ্ড! মন্দিরের মধ্যে কেউ যাচ্ছে না, দোরের পাশে একটা পঞ্চাশ মুণ্ডু, একশত হাত, দু-শ পেট, পাঁচ-শ ঠ্যাঙওলা মূর্তি খাড়া! সেইটার পায়ের তলায় সকলেই গড়াগড়ি দিচ্ছে। একজনকে কারণ জিজ্ঞাসা করায় উত্তর পেলুম যে, ওই ভেতরে যে সকল ঠাকুর দেবতা, ওদের দূর থেকে একটা গড় বা দুটি ফুল ছুড়ে ফেললেই যথেষ্ট পূজা হয়। আসল পূজা কিন্তু এঁর করা চাই—যিনি দ্বারদেশে; আর ঐ যে বেদ-বেদান্ত, দর্শন, পুরাণ, শাস্ত্রসকল দেখছ, ও মধ্যে মধ্যে শুনলে হানি নাই, কিন্তু পালতে হবে এঁর হুকুম। তখন আবার জিজ্ঞাসা করলুম—তবে এ দেবদেবের নাম কি? উত্তর এল—এঁর নাম 'লোকাচার'। —ভাববার কথা, পৃঃ ৪৯-৫০।

৩। আপনার লোকের একটি রূপ থাকে, তেমন আর কোথাও দেখা যায় না। নিজের খ্যাঁদা বোঁচা ভাই বোন ছেলেমেয়ের চেয়ে গন্ধর্বলোকেও সুন্দর পাওয়া যাবে না সত্য। কিন্তু গন্ধর্বলোক বেড়িয়েও যদি আপনার লোককে যথার্থ সুন্দর পাওয়া যায়, সে আহ্লাদ রাখবার কি জায়গা থাকে? এই অনন্তশষ্পশ্যামলা সহস্রস্রোতস্বতী-মাল্যধারিণী বাঙলা দেশের একটি রূপ আছে। সেরূপ—কিছু আছে মলয়ালমে (মালাবার), আর কিছু কাশ্মীরে। জলে কি আর রূপ নাই? জলে জলময়, মুষলধারে বৃষ্টি কচুর পাতার উপর দিয়ে গড়িয়ে যাচ্ছে, রাশি রাশি তাল-নারিকেল-খেজুরের মাথা একটু অবনত হ'য়ে সে ধারাসম্পাত বইছে, চারিদিকে ভেকের ঘর্ঘর আওয়াজ,—এতে কি রূপ নাই? আর আমাদের গঙ্গার কিনার—বিদেশ থেকে না এলে, ডায়মণ্ডহারবারের মুখ দিয়ে না গঙ্গায় প্রবেশ করলে সে বোঝা যায় না। সে নীল নীল আকাশ, তার কোলে কালো মেঘ, তার কোলে সাদাটে মেঘ, সোনালি কিনারাদার, তার নীচে ঝোপ-ঝোপ তাল নারিকেল খেজুরের মাথা

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বাতাসে যেন লক্ষ লক্ষ চামরের মতো হেলচে, তার নীচে ফিকে, ঘন, ঈষৎ পীতাভ একটু কাল মেশান, ইত্যাদি হরেক রকম সবুজের কাঁড়ী ঢালা আম-নীচু জাম কাঁটাল—পাতাই পাতা—গাছ ডাল পালা আর দেখা যাচ্চে না, আশে পাশে ঝাড় ঝাড় বাঁশ হেলছে, দুলচে, আর সকলের নীচে—যার কাছে ইয়ারকান্দী ইরানি তুর্কিস্তানি গালচে দুলচে কোথায় হার মেনে যায়! সেই ঘাস, যতদূর চাও সেই শ্যাম-শ্যাম ঘাস, কে যেন ছেঁটে ছুঁটে ঠিক ক'রে রেখেচে; জলের কিনারা পর্য্যন্ত সেই ঘাস; গঙ্গার মৃদুমন্দ হিল্লোল যে অবধি জমিকে ঢেকেচে, যে অবধি অল্প অল্প লীলাময় ধাক্কা দিচ্চে, সে অবধি ঘাসে আঁটা। আবার তার নীচে আমাদের গঙ্গাজল। আবার পায়ের নীচে থেকে দেখ, ক্রমে উপরে যাও, উপর উপর মাথার উপর পর্য্যন্ত, একটি রেখার মধ্যে এত রঙের খেলা, একটি রঙে এত রকমারি, আর কোথাও দেখেচ? বলি, রঙের নেশা ধরেচে কখন কি—যে রঙের নেশায় পতঙ্গ আগুনে পুড়ে মরে, মৌমাছি ফুলের গারদে অনাহারে মরে? হুঁ, বলি—এই বেলা এ গঙ্গা-মা'র শোভা যা দেখবার দেখে নাও, আর বড় একটা কিছু থাকচে না। দৈত্য-দানবের হাতে পড়ে এসব যাবে। ঐ ঘাসের জায়গায় উঠবেন—ইটের পাঁজা, আর নাচবেন ইট-খোলার গর্তকুল। যেখানে গঙ্গার ছোট ছোট ঢেউগুলি ঘাসের সঙ্গে খেলা করচে, সেখানে দাঁড়াবেন পাট-বোঝাই ফ্ল্যাট, আর সেই গাধাবোট; আর ঐ তাল তমাল আম নীচুর রঙ, ঐ নীল আকাশ, মেঘের বাহার—ওসব কি আর দেখতে পাবে? দেখবে—পাথুরে কয়লার ধোঁয়া আর তার মাঝে মাঝে ভূতের মতো অস্পষ্ট দাঁড়িয়ে আছেন কলের চিমনি!!!

—পরিব্রাজক, পৃঃ ৮-১০।

৪। আর্য্যবাবাগণের জাঁকই কর, প্রাচীন ভারতের গৌরব ঘোষণা দিনরাতই কর, আর যতই কেন তোমরা "ডম্‌ম্‌ম্‌" বলে ডম্ফই কর, তোমরা হচ্চ দশ হাজার বচ্ছরের মমি!! যাদের "চলমান শ্মশান" বলে তোমাদের পূর্বপুরুষেরা ঘৃণা করেচেন, ভারতে যা কিছু বর্তমান জীবন আছে, তা তাদেরই মধ্যে। আর "চলমান শ্মশান" হচ্চ তোমরা। তোমাদের বাড়ী ঘর দুয়ার মিউজিয়াম, তোমাদের আচার, ব্যবহার,

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চালচলন দেখ্‌লেও বোধ হয়, যেন ঠান্‌দিদির মুখে গল্প শুন্‌চি! তোমাদের সঙ্গে সাক্ষাৎ আলাপ করেও ঘরে এসে মনে হয়, যেন চিত্র-শালিকায় ছবি দেখে এলুম্‌। এ মায়ার সংসারের আসল প্রহেলিকা, আসল মরু মরীচিকা, তোমরা—ভারতের উচ্চ বর্ণেরা। তোমরা ভূত কাল, লুঙ্‌ লঙ্‌ লিট্‌ সব এক সঙ্গে। বর্তমান কালে তোমাদের দেখ্‌চি বলে যে বোধ হচ্চে, ওটা অজীর্ণতাজনিত দুঃস্বপ্ন। ভবিষ্যতের তোমরা শূন্য, তোমরা ইৎ লোপ লুপ্‌। স্বপ্নরাজ্যের লোক তোমরা, আর দেরী কচ্চ কেন? ভূত-ভারত-শরীরের রক্তমাংসহীন-কঙ্কালকুল তোমরা, কেন শীঘ্র শীঘ্র ধূলিতে পরিণত হয়ে বায়ুতে মিশে যাচ্চ না? হুঁ, তোমাদের অস্থিময় অঙ্গুলিতে পূর্ব্বপুরুষদের সঞ্চিত কতকগুলি অমূল্য রত্নের অঙ্গুরীয়ক আছে, তোমাদের পূতিগন্ধ শরীরের আলিঙ্গনে পূর্ব্বকালের অনেকগুলি রত্নপেটিকা রক্ষিত রয়েচে। এতদিন দেবার সুবিধা হয় নাই। এখন ইংরাজরাজ্যে, অবাধ বিদ্যাচর্চ্চার দিনে, উত্তরাধিকারীদের দাও, যত শীঘ্র পার দাও। তোমরা শূন্যে বিলীন হও, আর নূতন ভারত বেরুক। বেরুক লাঙ্গল ধরে, চাষার কুটীর ভেদ করে, জেলে, মালা, মুচি, মেথরের ঝুপ্‌ড়ির মধ্য হতে। বেরুক মুদির দোকান থেকে, ভূনাওয়ালার উনুনের পাশ থেকে। বেরুক কারখানা থেকে, হাট থেকে, বাজার থেকে। বেরুক ঝোড়, জঙ্গল, পাহাড়, পর্ব্বত থেকে। এরা সহস্র সহস্র বৎসর অত্যাচার সয়েচে, নীরবে সয়েচে,—তাতে পেয়েচে অপূর্ব্ব সহিষ্ণুতা। সনাতন দুঃখ ভোগ করেচে,—তাতে পেয়েচে অটল জীবনীশক্তি। এরা এক মুটো ছাতু খেয়ে দুনিয়া উল্‌টে দিতে পারবে; আধখানা রুটী পেলে ত্রৈলোক্যে এদের তেজ ধর্‌বে না; এরা রক্তবীজের প্রাণ-সম্পন্ন। আর পেয়েচে অদ্ভুত সদাচার বল, যা ত্রৈলোক্যে নাই। এত শান্তি, এত প্রীতি, এত ভাল-বাসা, এত মুখটি চুপ করে দিন রাত খাটা, এবং কার্য্যকালে সিংহের বিক্রম!! অতীতের কঙ্কালচয়!—এই সামনে তোমার উত্তরাধিকারী ভবিষ্যৎ ভারত। ঐ তোমার রত্নপেটিকা, তোমার মাণিকের আংটি,—ফেলে দাও এদের মধ্যে, যত শীঘ্র পার ফেলে দাও; আর তুমি যাও, হাওয়ায় বিলীন হয়ে, অদৃশ্য হয়ে যাও, কেবল কান খাড়া রেখো; তোমার যাই বিলীন হওয়া, অম্‌নি শুন্‌বে কোটিজীমূতস্যন্দী

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ত্রৈলোক্যকম্পনকারী ভবিষ্যৎ ভারতের উদ্বোধন ধ্বনি "ওয়াহ গুরু কি ফতে"।

—পরিব্রাজক, পৃঃ ৪২-৪।

৫। স্বামীজি! দেশ নদী পাহাড় সমুদ্রের কথাত অনেক শুন্‌লে, এখন প্রাচীন কাহিনী কিছু শোন। এ প্রাচীন কাহিনী বড় অদ্ভুত। গল্প নয়—সত্য; মানবজাতির যথার্থ ইতিহাস। এই সকল প্রাচীন দেশ কালসাগরে প্রায় লয় হয়েছিল। যা কিছু লোকে জান্‌তো, তা প্রায় প্রাচীন যবন ঐতিহাসিকের অদ্ভুত গল্পপূর্ণ প্রবন্ধ অথবা বাইবেল নামক য়াহুদী পুরাণের অত্যদ্ভুত বর্ণন মাত্র। এখন পুরাণো পাথর, বাড়ী, ঘর, টালিতে লেখা পুঁথি, আর ভাষা বিশ্লেষ শত মুখে গল্প কোর্‌চে। এ গল্প এখন সবে আরম্ভ হয়েচে, এখনই কত আশ্চর্য কথা বেরিয়ে পড়েচে, পরে কি বেরুবে কে জানে? দেশ দেশান্তরের মহা মহা পণ্ডিত দিন রাত এক টুকরো শিলালেখ বা ভাঙ্গা বাসন বা একটা বাড়ী বা একখানা টালি নিয়ে মাথা ঘামাচ্চেন, আর সেকালের লুপ্ত বার্তা বার কোর্‌চেন।

যখন মুসলমান নেতা ওস্‌মান্‌ কনষ্টাণ্টিনোপল দখল কোর্‌লে, সমস্ত পূর্ব ইউরোপে ইসলামের ধ্বজা সগর্বে উড়তে লাগ্‌লো, তখন প্রাচীন গ্রীকদের যে সকল পুস্তক, বিদ্যাবুদ্ধি তাদের নির্ব্বীর্য্য বংশ-ধরদের কাছে লুকান ছিল, তা পশ্চিম-ইউরোপে পলায়মান গ্রীক্‌দের সঙ্গে সঙ্গে ছড়িয়ে পড়লো। গ্রীকেরা রোমের বহুকাল পদানত হয়েও বিদ্যা বুদ্ধিতে রোমকদের গুরু ছিল। এমন কি, গ্রীক্‌রা কৃশ্চান হওয়ায় এবং গ্রীক্‌ ভাষায় কৃশ্চানদের ধর্ম্মগ্রন্থ লিখিত হওয়ায়, সমগ্র রোমক সাম্রাজ্যে কৃশ্চান ধর্ম্মের বিজয় হয়। কিন্তু প্রাচীন গ্রীক্‌, যাদের আমরা যবন বলি, যারা ইউরোপী সভ্যতার আদ্‌গুরু, তাদের সভ্যতার চরম উত্থান কৃশ্চানদের অনেক পূর্বে। কৃশ্চান হয়ে পর্যন্ত তাদের বিদ্যাবুদ্ধি সমস্ত লোপ পেয়ে গেল, কিন্তু যেমন হিন্দুদের ঘরে পূর্ব্বপুরুষদের বিদ্যাবুদ্ধি কিছু কিছু রক্ষিত আছে, তেমনি কৃশ্চান গ্রীক্‌দের কাছে ছিল; সেই সকল পুস্তক চারিদিকে ছড়িয়ে পড়লো। তাতেই ইংরাজ, জার্ম্মান, ফ্রেঞ্চ প্রভৃতি জাতির মধ্যে প্রথম সভ্যতার

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উন্মেষ। গ্রীক্‌ভাষা, গ্রীক্‌বিদ্যা শেখবার একটা ধূম পড়ে গেল। প্রথমে যা কিছু ঐ সকল পুস্তকে ছিল, তা হাড়শুদ্ধ গেলা হল। তারপর যখন নিজেদের বুদ্ধি মার্জ্জিত হয়ে আসতে লাগ্‌লো এবং ক্রমে ক্রমে পদার্থ-বিদ্যার অভ্যুত্থান হতে লাগ্‌লো, তখন ঐ সকল গ্রন্থের সময়, প্রণেতা, বিষয়, যথাতথ্য ইত্যাদির গবেষণা চলতে লাগ্‌লো। কৃশ্চানদের ধর্ম্ম-গ্রন্থগুলি ছাড়া প্রাচীন অকৃশ্চান গ্রীক্‌দের সমস্ত গ্রন্থের উপর মতামত প্রকাশ কোর্‌তে ত আর কোনও বাধা ছিল না, কাজেই বাহ্য এবং অভ্যন্তর সমালোচনার এক বিদ্যা বেরিয়ে পড়লো।

মনে কর, একখানা পুস্তকে লিখেচে যে অমুক সময়ে অমুক ঘটনা ঘটেছিল। কেউ দয়া কোরে একটা পুস্তকে যা হয় লিখেচেন বল্‌লেই কি সেটা সত্য হল? লোকে, বিশেষ সে কালের, অনেককথাই কল্পনা থেকে লিখ্‌তো; আবার প্রকৃতি, এমনকি, আমাদের পৃথিবী সম্বন্ধে তাদের জ্ঞান অল্প ছিল; এই সকল কারণ গ্রন্থোক্ত বিষয়ের সত্যাসত্যের নির্দ্ধারণে বিষম সন্দেহ জন্মাতে লাগ্‌লো; মনে কর, একজন গ্রীক্‌ ঐতিহাসিক লিখেচেন যে, অমুক সময়ে ভারতবর্ষে চন্দ্রগুপ্ত বলে একজন রাজা ছিলেন। যদি ভারতবর্ষের গ্রন্থেও ঐ সময়ে ঐ রাজার উল্লেখ দেখা যায়, তাহলে বিষয়টা অনেক প্রমাণ হল বৈকি। যদি চন্দ্রগুপ্তের কতকগুলো টাকা পাওয়া যায় বা তাঁর সময়ের একটা বাড়ী পাওয়া যায়, যাতে তাঁর উল্লেখ আছে, তাহলে আর কোন গোলই রইলো না।

মনে কর, আবার একটা পুস্তকে লেখা আছে যে একটা ঘটনা সিকন্দর বাদসার সময়ের, কিন্তু তার মধ্যে দুএকজন রোমক বাদসার উল্লেখ রয়েচে, এমন ভাবে রয়েচে যে, প্রক্ষিপ্ত হওয়া সম্ভব নয়—তাহলে সে পুস্তকটি সিকন্দর বাদসার সময়ের নয় বলে প্রমাণ হল।

অথবা ভাষা—সময়ে সময়ে সকল ভাষারই পরিবর্তন হচ্চে, আবার এক-এক লেখকের এক একটা ঢঙ্‌ থাকে। যদি একটা পুস্তকে খামাকা একটা অপ্রাসঙ্গিক বর্ণনা লেখকের বিপরীত ঢঙ্গে থাকে, তা হলেই সেটা প্রক্ষিপ্ত বলে সন্দেহ হবে। এই প্রকার নানা প্রকারে সন্দেহ, সংশয়, প্রমাণ প্রয়োগ কোরে গ্রন্থতত্ত্ব নির্ণয়ের এক বিদ্যা বেরিয়ে পড়্‌লো। তার উপর আধুনিক বিজ্ঞান দ্রুতপদসঞ্চারে নানা দিক্‌

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হতে রশ্মিবিকীরণ কর্‌তে লাগ্‌লো; ফল—যে পুস্তকে কোনও অলৌকিক ঘটনা লিখিত আছে, তা একেবারেই অবিশ্বাস্য হয়ে পড়্‌লো।

সকলের উপর—মহাতরঙ্গরূপ সংস্কৃত ভাষার ইউরোপে প্রবেশ এবং ভারতবর্ষে, ইউফ্রেটিস্‌ নদীতটে ও মিসরদেশে, প্রাচীন শিলালেখের পুনঃ পঠন; আর বহুকাল ভূগর্ভে বা পর্ব্বতপার্শ্বে লুক্কায়িত মন্দিরাদির আবিষ্ক্রিয়া ও তাহাদের যথার্থ ইতিহাসের জ্ঞান। পূর্ব্বে বলেচি যে, এ নূতন গবেষণা বিদ্যা "বাইবেল" বা "নিউটেষ্টামেণ্ট" গ্রন্থগুলিকে আলাদা রেখেছিল। এখন মার-ধোর, জেন্ত পোড়ান ত আর নেই, কেবল সমাজের ভয়; তা উপেক্ষা কোরে অনেকগুলি পণ্ডিত উক্ত পুস্তকগুলিকেও বেজায় বিশ্লেষ করেচেন। আশা করি, হিন্দু প্রভৃতি ধর্ম্মপুস্তককে ও'রা যেমন বেপরোয়া হয়ে টুক্‌রো টুকরো করেন, কালে সেই প্রকার সৎসাহসের সহিত য়াহুদী ও কৃশ্চান পুস্তকাদিকেও করবেন। একথা বলি কেন, তার একটা উদাহরণ দিই—মাস্‌পেরো বলে এক মহাপণ্ডিত, মিসর প্রত্নতত্ত্বের অতি প্রতিষ্ঠ লেখক, 'ইস্তোয়ার আসিএন ওরিআঁতাল' বলে মিসর ও বাবিলদিগের এক প্রকাণ্ড ইতিহাস লিখেচেন। কয়েক বৎসর পূর্ব্বে উক্ত গ্রন্থের এক ইংরেজ প্রত্নতত্ত্ববিদের ইংরাজীতে তর্জ্জমা পড়ি। এবার ব্রিটিশ মিউজিয়মের (British Museum) এক অধ্যক্ষকে কয়েকখানি মিসর ও বাবিল সম্বন্ধীয় গ্রন্থের বিষয় জিজ্ঞাসা করায় মাসপেরোর গ্রন্থের কথা উল্লেখ হয়। তাতে আমার কাছে উক্ত গ্রন্থের তর্জ্জমা আছে শুনে তিনি বল্‌লেন যে, ওতে হবে না, অনুবাদক কিছু গোঁড়া কৃশ্চান; এজন্য যেখানে যেখানে মাসপেরোর অনুসন্ধান খ্রীষ্টধর্ম্মকে আঘাত করে, সে সব গোলমাল কোরে দেওয়া আছে! মূল ফরাসী ভাষায় গ্রন্থ পড়্‌তে বল্‌লেন। পড়ে দেখি তাইত—এ যে বিষম সমস্যা। ধর্ম্মগোঁড়ামিটুকু কেমন জিনিষ জান ত?—সত্যাসত্য সব তাল পাকিয়ে যায়। সেই অবধি ওসব গবেষণা গ্রন্থের তর্জ্জমার ওপর অনেকটা শ্রদ্ধা কমে গেচে।

আর এক নূতন বিদ্যা জন্মেচে, যার নাম জাতিবিদ্যা অর্থাৎ মানুষের রঙ্গ, চুল, চেহারা, মাথার গঠন, ভাষা প্রভৃতি দেখে, শ্রেণীবন্ধ করা।

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জর্ম্মানরা সর্ব্ববিদ্যায় বিশারদ হলেও সংস্কৃত আর প্রাচীন আসিরীয় বিদ্যায় বিশেষ পটু; বর্গস্ প্রভৃতি জর্ম্মান পণ্ডিত ইহার নিদর্শন। ফরাসীরা প্রাচীন মিসরের তত্ত্ব উদ্ধারে বিশেষ সফল—মাস্পেরোপ্রমুখ পণ্ডিত মণ্ডলী ফরাসী। ওলন্দাজেরা য়াহুদী ও প্রাচীন খ্রীষ্টধর্ম্মের বিশ্লেষণে বিশেষ প্রতিষ্ঠ—কুণা প্রভৃতি লেখক জগৎপ্রসিদ্ধ।

ইংরাজরা অনেক বিদ্যার আরম্ভ কোরে দিয়ে, তারপর সরে পড়ে।

এই সকল পণ্ডিতদের মত কিছু বলি। যদি ভাল না লাগে, তাদের সঙ্গে ঝগড়া-ঝাঁটি করো, আমায় দোষ দিও না।

হিন্দু, য়াহুদী, প্রাচীন বাবিলি, মিশরি প্রভৃতি প্রাচীন জাতিদের মতে, সমস্ত মানুষ এক আদিম পিতামাতা হতে অবতীর্ণ হয়েচে। একথা এখন বড় লোকে মান্‌তে চায় না।

কালো কুচ্‌কুচে, নাকহীন, ঠোঁটপুরু, গড়ানে কপাল, আর কোঁকড়া চুল কাফ্রী দেখেচ? প্রায় ঐ ঢঙের গড়ন, তবে আকারে ছোট, চুল অত কোঁক্‌ড়া নয়, সাঁওতালি, আণ্ডামানি, ভিল দেখেচ? প্রথম শ্রেণীর নাম নিগ্রো (Negro)। ইহাদের বাসভূমি আফ্রিকা। দ্বিতীয় জাতির নাম নেগ্রিটো (Negrito)—ছোট নিগ্রো; ইহারা প্রাচীন কালে আরবের কতক অংশে, ইউফ্রেটিস্ তটের অংশে, পারস্যের দক্ষিণভাগে ভারতবর্ষময়, আণ্ডামান প্রভৃতি দ্বীপে, মায় অষ্ট্রেলিয়া পর্যন্ত বাস কর্‌ত। আধুনিক সময়ে ভারতের কোন কোন ঝোড় জঙ্গলে, আণ্ডামানে এবং অষ্ট্রেলিয়ায় ইহারা বর্তমান।

লেপ্‌চা, ভুটিয়া, চীনি প্রভৃতি দেখেচ?—সাদা রঙ্গ বা হল্‌দে, সোজা কালো চুল? কালো চোখ, কিন্তু চোখ কোণাকুণি বসান, দাঁড়ি গোঁফ অল্প, চেপ্টা মুখ, চোখের নীচের হাড় দুটো ভারি উঁচু।

নেপালি, বর্ম্মি, সায়েমি, মালাই, জাপানি দেখেচ? এরা ঐ গড়ন, তবে আকারে ছোট।

এ শ্রেণীর দুই জাতির নাম মোগল আর মোগলইড্ (ছোট মোগল)। 'মোগল' জাতি এক্ষণে অধিকাংশ আসিয়া খণ্ড দখল কোরে বসেচে। এরাই মোগল, কালমুক, হুন, চীন, তাতার, তুর্ক, মানচু, কির্‌গিজ প্রভৃতি বিবিধ শাখায় বিভক্ত হয়ে, এক চীন ও তিব্বতি সওয়ায়, তাঁবু নিয়ে আজ এদেশে, কাল ওদেশে করে, ভেড়া ছাগল গরু

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ঘোড়া চরিয়ে বেড়ায়, আর বাগে পেলেই পঙ্গপালের মত এসে দুনিয়া ওলট-পালট কোরে দেয়। এদের আর একটি নাম তুরাণি। ইরাণ তুরাণ—সেই তুরাণ।

রঙ্গ কালো কিন্তু সোজা চুল, সোজা নাক, সোজা কালো চোখ—প্রাচীন মিসর, প্রাচীন বাবিলোনিয়ায় বাস কর্‌ত এবং অধুনা ভারতময়,—বিশেষ, দক্ষিণ দেশে বাস করে; ইউরোপেও এক আধ জায়গায় চিহ্ন পাওয়া যায়,—এ এক জাতি। ইহাদের পারিভাষিক নাম দ্রাবিড়।

সাদা রঙ্গ, সোজা চোখ কিন্তু কান নাক—রামছাগলের মুখের মত বাঁকা আর ডগা মোটা, কপাল গড়ান, ঠোঁট পুরু—যেমন উত্তর আরবের লোক, বর্তমান য়াহুদী, প্রাচীন বাবিল, আসিরী, ফিনিস্ প্রভৃতি; ইহাদের ভাষাও এক প্রকারের; ইহাদের নাম সেমিটিক্।

আর যারা সংস্কৃতের সদৃশ ভাষা কয়, সোজা নাক মুখ চোখ, রঙ্গ সাদা, চুল কালো বা কটা, চোখ কাল বা নীল, এদের নাম আরিয়ান্।

—পরিব্রাজক, পৃঃ ৯৩-১০১।

৬। আর বোঝ যে আমাদের এখনও জগতের সভ্যতা-ভাণ্ডারে কিছু দেবার আছে, তাই আমরা বেঁচে আছি। এটি তোমরাও বেশ করে বোঝ—যাঁরা অন্তর্বহিঃ সাহেব-সেজে বসেছ এবং 'আমরা নরপশু, তোমরা হে ইউরোপী-লোক, আমাদের উদ্ধার কর,' বলে কেঁদে কেঁদে বেড়াচ্ছ। আর, যীশু এসে ভারতে বসেছেন বলে হাসেন হোসেন কর্‌ছ। ওহে বাপু যীশুও আসেন নি, জিহোবাও আসেন নি, আসবেনও না। তাঁরা এখন আপনাদের ঘর সামলাচ্ছেন, আমাদের দেশে আসবার সময় নাই। এদেশে সেই বুড়ো শিব বসে আছেন, মা কালী পাঁঠা খাচ্ছেন, আর বংশীধারী বাঁশী বাজাচ্ছেন। ঐ বুড়ো শিব ষাঁড় চড়ে ভারতবর্ষ থেকে একদিকে সুমাত্রা, বোর্ণিও, সেলিবিস, মায় অষ্ট্রেলিয়া, আমেরিকার কিনার পর্যন্ত ডমরু বাজিয়ে এককালে বেরিয়েছেন, আর একদিকে, তিব্বত, চীন, জাপান, সাইবেরিয়া পর্যন্ত বুড়ো শিব ষাঁড় চড়িয়েছেন, এখনও চড়াচ্ছেন। ঐ যে মা কালী—উনি চীন, জাপান পর্যন্ত পূজা খাচ্ছেন, ওঁকেই যীশুর-মা মেরী করে কৃশ্চানরা পূজা কর্‌ছে। ঐ যে হিমালয় পাহাড় দেখছ, ওরির উত্তরে

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কৈলাস, সেথা বুড়ো শিবের প্রধান আড্ডা। ও কৈলাস দশমুণ্ড-কুড়িহাত রাবণ নাড়াতে পারেনি, ওঁকে এখন পাদ্রী-ফাদ্রীর কর্ম্ম!! ঐ বুড়ো শিব ডমরু বাজাবেন, মা কালী পাঁঠা খাবেন, আর কৃষ্ণ বাঁশী বাজাবেন,—এদেশে চিরকাল। যদি না পছন্দ হয়, সরে পড়ে না কেন? তোমাদের দু চারজনের জন্য দেশশুদ্ধ লোককে হাড় জ্বালাতন হতে হবে বুঝি? চরে খাওগে না কেন? এত বড় দুনিয়াটা পড়ে ত রয়েছে। তা নয়। মুরদ কোথায়? ঐ বুড়ো শিবের অন্ন খাবেন, আর নেমক-হারামি কর্ব্বেন, যীশুর জয় গাইবেন—আ মরি!! ঐ যে সাহেবদের কাছে নাকি-কান্না ধর যে 'আমরা অতি নীচ, আমরা অতি অপদার্থ, আমাদের সব খরাপ,' এ কথা ঠিক হতে পারে— তোমরা অবশ্য সত্য-বাদী; তবে ঐ আমরার ভিতর দেশশুদ্ধকে জড়াও কেন? ওটা কোন্-দেশী ভদ্রতা হে বাপু? —প্রাচ্য ও পাশ্চাত্ত্য, পৃঃ ৫-৬।

৭। পূর্ব্বেই বলেছি যে, প্রত্যেক জাতির একটা জাতীয় উদ্দেশ্য আছে। প্রাকৃতিক নিয়মাধীন বা মহাপুরুষদের প্রতিভাবলে প্রত্যেক জাতির সামাজিক রীতি-নীতি, সেই উদ্দেশ্যটি সফল কর্‌বার উপযোগী হয়ে গড়ে যাচ্ছে। প্রত্যেক জাতির জীবনের ঐ উদ্দেশ্যটি এবং তদুপ-যোগী উপায়রূপ আচার ছাড়া, আর সমস্ত রীতি-নীতিই বাড়ার-ভাগ। এই বাড়ার ভাগ রীতিনীতিগুলির হ্রাস-বৃদ্ধিতে বড় বেশী এসে যায় না; কিন্তু যদি সেই আসল উদ্দেশ্যটিতে ঘা পড়ে, তখুনি সে জাতির নাশ হয়ে যাবে।

ছেলেবেলায় গল্প শুনেছ যে, রাক্ষুসীর প্রাণ একটা পাখীর মধ্যে ছিল। সে পাখীটার নাশ না হলে, রাক্ষুসীর কিছুতেই নাশ হয় না; এও তাই। আবার দেখ্‌বে যে, যে অধিকারগুলো জাতীয় জীবনের জন্য একান্ত আবশ্যক নয়, সে অধিকারগুলো সব যাক্ না, সে জাতি বড় তাতে আপত্তি করে না; কিন্তু, যখন যথার্থ জাতীয় জীবনে ঘা পড়ে, তৎক্ষণাৎ মহাবলে প্রতিঘাত করে।

তিনটি বর্ত্তমান জাতির তুলনা কর, যাদের ইতিহাস তোমরা অল্প-বিস্তর জান—ফরাসী, ইংরেজ, হিন্দু। রাজনৈতিক স্বাধীনতা ফরাসী জাতি-চরিত্রের মেরুদণ্ড। প্রজারা সব অত্যাচার অবাধে সয়, করভারে

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পিষে দাও, কথা নেই; দেশশুদ্ধকে টেনে নিয়ে জোর করে সেপাই কর, আপত্তি নেই; কিন্তু যেই সে স্বাধীনতার উপর হাত কেউ দিয়েছে, অমনি সমস্ত জাতি উন্মাদবৎ প্রতিঘাত কর্‌বে। কেউ কারুর উপর চেপে বসে হুকুম চালাতে পার্‌বে না। এইটিই ফরাসী চরিত্রের মূল-মন্ত্র। 'জ্ঞানী মূর্খ ধনী দরিদ্র উচ্চ-বংশ নীচ-বংশ রাজ্যশাসনে সামাজিক-স্বাধীনতায় আমাদের সমান অধিকার।' এর ওপর হাত কেউ দিতে গেলেই তাঁকে ভুগ্‌তে হয়।

ইংরাজ-চরিত্রে ব্যবসা-বুদ্ধি আদান-প্রদান প্রধান; যথাভাগ ন্যায়-বিভাগ, ইংরাজের আসল কথা। রাজা, কুলীন জাতি-অধিকার, ইংরেজ ঘাড় হেঁট করে স্বীকার করে; কেবল যদি গাঁট থেকে পয়সাটি বার কর্ত্তে হয়, ত তার হিসাব চাইবে। রাজা আছে, বেশ কথা—মান্য করি, কিন্তু টাকাটি যদি তুমি চাও ত তার কার্য্যকারণ হিসাব-পত্রে আমি দু কথা বল্‌বো বুঝ্‌বো, তবে দেব। রাজা জোর করে টাকা আদায় কর্ত্তে গিয়ে মহাবিপ্লব উপস্থিত করালেন; রাজাকে মেরে ফেল্‌লে।

হিন্দু বল্‌ছেন কি যে, রাজনৈতিক সামাজিক স্বাধীনতা, বেশ কথা। কিন্তু আসল জিনিষ হচ্চে পারমার্থিক স্বাধীনতা—'মুক্তি'। এইটিই জাতীয় জীবনোদ্দেশ্য; বৈদিক বল, জৈন বল, বৌদ্ধ বল, অদ্বৈত বিশিষ্টাদ্বৈত বা দ্বৈত যা কিছু বল, সব ঐখানে এক মত। ঐখানটায় হাত দিও না, তা হলেই সর্ব্বনাশ; তা ছাড়া যা কর, চুপ করে আছি। লাথি মার, 'কাল' বল, সর্ব্বস্ব কেড়ে নাও—বড় এসে যাচ্ছে না; কিন্তু ঐ দোরটা ছেড়ে রাখ। এই দেখ, বর্ত্তমানকালে পাঠান বংশরা আস্‌ছিল-যাচ্ছিল কেউ সুস্থির হয়ে রাজ্য কর্ত্তে পাচ্ছিল না; কেন না ঐ হিঁদুর ধর্ম্মে ক্রমাগত আঘাত কচ্ছিল। আর মোগল-রাজ্য কেমন সুদৃঢ় প্রতিষ্ঠ, কেমন মহাবল হল।—কেন? না, মোগলরা ঐ জায়গাটায় ঘা দেয় নি। হিদুরাই ত মোগলের সিংহাসনের ভিত্তি—জাহাঙ্গীর, সাজাহান, দারাসেকো, এদের সকলের মা যে হিঁদু। আর দেখ, যেই পোড়া আরঙ্গজেব আবার ঐখানটায় ঘা দিলে, অমনি এত বড় মোগলরাজ্য স্বপ্নের ন্যায় উড়ে গেল। ঐ যে ইংরেজের সুদৃঢ় সিংহাসন, এ কিসের উপর? ঐ ধর্ম্মে হাত কিছুতেই দেয় না বলে। পাদরী-পুঙ্গবেরা একটু-আধটু চেষ্টা করেই ত, '৫৭ সালের হাঙ্গামা

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উপস্থিত করেছিল। ইংরাজেরা যতক্ষণ এইটি বেশ করে বুঝ্‌বে এবং পালন করবে, ততক্ষণ ওদের 'তকত তাজ অচল রাজধানী'। বিজ্ঞ বহুদর্শী ইংরাজেরাও একথা বোঝে, লর্ড রবার্টসের 'ভারতবর্ষে ৪১ বৎসর' নামক পুস্তক পড়ে দেখ। —প্রাচ্য ও পাশ্চাত্ত্য, পৃঃ ১৯-২২।

৮। সভ্যতার আকর প্রাচীন গ্রীক ডুবে গেল, রাজচক্রবর্ত্তী রোম বর্ব্বর আক্রমণ-তরঙ্গে তলিয়ে গেল। ইয়োরোপের আলো নিবে গেল, এদিকে আর এক অতি-বর্ব্বর জাতির আসিয়া খণ্ডে প্রাদুর্ভাব হল—আরব জাতি। মহাবেগে সে আরব-তরঙ্গ পৃথিবী ছাইতে লাগ্‌ল! মহাবল পারস্য আরবের পদানত হল, মুসলমান ধর্ম্ম গ্রহণ কর্‌তে হল, কিন্তু তার ফলে মুসলমান ধর্ম্ম আর একরূপ ধারণ কর্‌লে; সে আরবি-ধর্ম্ম আর পারসিক সভ্যতা সম্মিলিত হল।

আরবের তলওয়ারের সঙ্গে সঙ্গে পারস্য সভ্যতা ছড়িয়ে পড়্‌তে লাগ্‌ল। সে পারস্য সভ্যতা প্রাচীন গ্রীস্‌ ও ভারতবর্ষ হতে নেওয়া। পূর্ব্ব পশ্চিম, দুদিক্‌ হতে মহাবলে মুসলমান তরঙ্গ ইয়োরোপের উপর আঘাত কর্‌লে, সঙ্গে সঙ্গে বর্ব্বর অন্ধ ইউরোপে জ্ঞানালোক ছড়িয়ে পড়্‌তে লাগলো। প্রাচীন গ্রীকদের বিদ্যা বুদ্ধি শিল্প বর্ব্বরাক্রান্ত ইতালিতে প্রবেশ কর্‌লে, ধরারাজধানী রোমের মৃতশরীরে প্রাণস্পন্দন হতে লাগ্‌লো—সে স্পন্দন ফ্লরেন্স নগরীতে প্রবলরূপ ধারণ কর্‌লে, প্রাচীন ইতালি নব-জীবনে বেঁচে উঠ্‌তে লাগ্‌লো,—এর নাম রেনেসাঁ (Renaissance) নব-জন্ম। কিন্তু সে নব জন্ম হলো ইতালির। ইয়োরোপের অন্যান্য অংশের তখন প্রথম জন্ম। সে কৃশ্চানী ষোড়শ শতাব্দীতে যখন আকবর, জাহাঙ্গীর, সাজাহান প্রভৃতি মোগল সম্রাট ভারতে মহাবল সাম্রাজ্য তুলেছেন, সেই সময় ইউরোপের জন্ম হল।

ইতালি বুড়ো জাত, একবার সাড়াশব্দ দিয়ে আবার পাশ ফিরে শুলো। সে সময় নানা কারণে ভারতবর্ষও জেগে উঠেছিল কিছু, আকবর হতে তিন পুরুষের রাজত্বে বিদ্যা-বুদ্ধি-শিল্পের আদর যথেষ্ট হয়েছিল, কিন্তু অতি বৃদ্ধ জাত, নানা কারণে আবার পাশ ফিরে শুলো। ইউরোপে, ইতালির পুনর্জন্ম গিয়ে লাগলো বলবান্‌, অভিনব

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নূতন ফ্রাঁ জাতিতে। চারিদিক্ হতে সভ্যতার ধারা সব এসে ফ্লরেন্স নগরীতে একত্র হয়ে নূতন রূপ ধারণ কর্‌লে; কিন্তু ইতালি জাতিতে সে বীর্য্য-ধারণের শক্তি ছিল না, ভারতের মত সে উন্মেষ ঐখানেই শেষ হয়ে যেত, কিন্তু ইয়োরোপের সৌভাগ্য, এই নূতন ফ্রাঁ জাতি আদরে সে তেজ গ্রহণ কর্‌লে। নবীন-রক্ত, নবীন জাত—সে তরঙ্গে মহাসাহসে নিজের তরণী ভাসিয়ে দিলে, সে স্রোতের বেগ ক্রমশঃই বাড়তে লাগ্‌লো, সে এক ধারা শতধারা হয়ে বাড়্‌তে লাগলো; ইয়োরোপের আর আর জাতি লোলুপ হয়ে খাল কেটে সে জল আপনার আপনার দেশে নিয়ে গেল এবং তাতে নিজেদের জীবনীশক্তি ঢেলে দেওয়ায় তার বেগ, তার বিস্তার বাড়তে লাগলো; ভারতে এসে সে তরঙ্গ লাগ্‌লো; জাপান সে বন্যায় বেঁচে উঠ্‌লো, সে জল পান করে মত্ত হয়ে উঠলো; জাপান আসিয়ার নূতন জাত।

—প্রাচ্য ও পাশ্চাত্ত্য, পৃঃ ৮১-৮৩।

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APPENDIX III

Rabindranāth's Appreciation of Vivekānanda

"কিছুদিন আগে বিবেকানন্দ বলেছিলেন, প্রত্যেক মানুষের মধ্যে ব্রহ্মের শক্তি; বলেছিলেন দরিদ্রের মধ্যে দিয়ে নারায়ণ আমাদের সেবা পেতে চান। এ'কে বলি বাণী। এই বাণী স্বার্থবোধের সীমার বাইরে মানুষের আত্মবোধকে অসীম মুক্তির পথ দেখালে। এতো কোনো বিশেষ আচারের উপদেশ নয়, ব্যবহারিক সঙ্কীর্ণ অনুশাসন নয়। ছুঁৎমার্গের বিরুদ্ধতা এর মধ্যে আপনিই এসে পড়েচে,—তার দ্বারা রাষ্ট্রিক স্বাতন্ত্র্যের সুযোগ হতে পারে বলে নয়, তার দ্বারা মানুষের অপমান দূর হ'বে ব'লে, সেই অপমানে আমাদের প্রত্যেকের আত্মাবমাননা। বিবেকানন্দের এই বাণী সম্পূর্ণ মানুষের উদ্বোধন বলেই কর্ম্মের মধ্যে দিয়ে ত্যাগের মধ্যে দিয়ে মুক্তির বিচিত্র পথে আমাদের যুবকদেরকে প্রবৃত্ত করেচে।"

[রবীন্দ্রনাথ কর্তৃক ফাল্গুন, ১৩৩৫ সালে স্বামী অশোকানন্দজীকে লিখিত পত্রের অংশ]

* * *

"আধুনিক কালে বিবেকানন্দই একটি মহৎ বাণী প্রচার করেছিলেন, সেটি কোনো আচারগত নয়। তিনি দেশের সকলকে ডেকে বলেছিলেন তোমাদের সকলেরই মধ্যে ব্রহ্মের শক্তি, দরিদ্রের মধ্যে দেবতা তোমাদের সেবা চান। এই কথাটি যুবকদের চিত্তকে সমগ্রভাবে জাগিয়েচে। তাই এই বাণীর ফল দেশের সেবায় আজ বিচিত্রভাবে বিচিত্র ত্যাগে ফলেচে। তাঁর বাণী মানুষকে যখনি সম্মান দিয়েচে তখনি শক্তি দিয়েচে। সেই শক্তির পথ কেবল এক ঝোঁকা নয়, তা কোনো দৈহিক প্রক্রিয়ার পুনরাবৃত্তির মধ্যে পর্য্যবসিত নয়, তা মানুষের প্রাণ মনকে বিচিত্রভাবে প্রাণবান করেচে। বাংলাদেশের যুবকদের মধ্যে যে সব দুঃসাহসিক অধ্যবসায়ের পরিচয় পাই তার মূলে আছে বিবেকানন্দের সেই বাণী যা মানুষের আত্মাকে ডেকেচে আঙ্গুলকে নয়। ভয় হয় পাছে আচারের সঙ্কীর্ণ অনুশাসন সেই নবোদ্বোধিত তেজকে চাপা দিয়ে ম্লান ক'রে দেয়, কঠিন তপস্যার পথ থেকে যান্ত্রিক আচারের পথে দেশের মনকে ভ্রষ্ট করে।

[সরসীলাল সরকারকে লিখিত, প্রবাসী, জ্যৈষ্ঠ ১৩৩৫ প্রকাশিত]

—বিশ্বভারতী পত্রিকা, ২১ বর্ষ, ৩য় সংখ্যা, ১৩৭১ হইতে উদ্ধৃত

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APPENDIX IV

Dr. Brojendra Nath Seal's Reminiscences of Vivekananda

An Early Stage of Vivekananda's Mental Development

"When I first met Vivekananda in 1881 we were fellow-students of Principal William Hastie, scholar, metaphysician, and poet, at the General Assembly's College. He was my senior in age, though I was his senior in the College by one year. Undeniably a gifted youth, sociable, free and unconventional in manners, a sweet singer, the soul of social circles, a brilliant conversationalist, somewhat bitter and caustic, piercing with the shafts of a keen wit the shows and mummeries of the world, sitting in the scorner's chair but hiding the tenderest of hearts under that garb of cynicism; altogether an inspired Bohemian but possessing what Bohemians lack, an iron will; somewhat peremptory and absolute, speaking with accents of authority and withal possessing a strange power of the eye which could hold his listeners in thrall.

"This was patent to all. But what was known to few was the inner man and his struggles,—the *Sturm und Drang* of soul which expressed itself in his restless and Bohemian wanderings.

"This was the beginning of a critical period in his mental history, during which he awoke to self-consciousness, and laid the foundations of his future personality. John Stuart Mill's *Three Essays on Religion* had upset his first boyish theism and easy optimism which he had imbibed from the outer circles of the Brahmo Samaj. The arguments from causality and design were for him broken reeds to lean upon, and he was haunted by the

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problem of the Evil in Nature and Man which he, by no means, could reconcile with the goodness of an All-wise and All-Powerful Creator. A friend introduced him to the study of Hume's Scepticism and Herbert Spencer's doctrine of the Unknowable, and his unbelief gradually assumed the form of a settled philosophical scepticism.

"His first emotional freshness and *naivete* were worn out. A certain dryness and incapacity for the old prayerful devotions, an *ennui* which he concealed under a *nonchalant* air of habitual mocking and scoffing, troubled his spirit. But music still stirred him as nothing else could, and gave him a weired unearthly sense of unseen realities which brought tears to his eyes.

"It was at this time that he came to me being brought by a common friend, the same who had introduced him to the study of Hume and Herbert Spencer. I had had a nodding acquaintance with him before, but now he opened himself to me and spoke of his harassing doubts and his despair of reaching certitude about the Ultimate Reality. He asked for a course of Theistic philosophic reading suited to a beginner in his situation. I named some authorities, but the stock arguments of the Intuitionists and the Scotch common sense school only confirmed him in his unbelief. Besides, he did not appear to me to have sufficient patience for humdrum reading,—his faculty was to imbibe not so much from books as from living communion and personal experience. With him it was life kindling life and thought kindling thought.

"I felt deeply drawn towards him, for I now knew that he would grapple with difficulties in earnest.

"I gave him a course of readings in Shelley. Shelley's Hymn to the spirit of Intellectual Beauty, his pantheism of impersonal love and his vision of a glorified millennial humanity moved him as the arguments of the philosophers had failed to move him. The universe was no

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longer a mere lifeless, loveless mechanism. It contained a spiritual principle of unity.

"I spoke to him now of a higher unity than Shelley had conceived, the unity of the Para Brahman as the Universal Reason. My own position at that time sought to fuse into one, three essential elements, the pure monism of the Vedanta, the dialectics of the Absolute idea of Hegel and the Gospel of Equality, Liberty and Fraternity of the French Revolution. The principle of individuation was with me the principle of Evil. The Universal Reason was all in all, Nature, life, history being the progressive unfolding of the Absolute idea. All ethical, social and political creeds and principles were to be tested by their conformity to Pure Reason. The element of feeling appeared to me merely pathological, a disturbance of sanity and order. How to overcome the resistance of matter, of individuality and of unreason, to the manifestation of the Pure Reason was the great problem of life and society, of education and legislation. I also held with the ardour of a young inexperienced visionary that the deliverance of the race from the bondage of unreason would come about through a new revolutionary polity of which the watchwords were Equality, Liberty and Fraternity.

"The sovereignty of Universal Reason, and the negation of the individual as the principle of morals, were ideas that soon came to satisfy Vivekananda's intellect and gave him an assured conquest over scepticism and materialism. What was more, they furnished him with the card and compass of life, as it were. But this brought him no peace. The conflict now entered deeper into his soul, for the creed of Universal Reason called on him to suppress the yearnings and susceptibilities of his artist nature and Bohemian temperament. His senses were keen and actue, his natural cravings and passions strong and

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imperious, his youthful susceptibilities tender, his conviviality free and merry. To suppress these was to kill his natural spontaneity,—almost to suppress his self. The struggle soon took a seriously ethical turn,—reason struggling for mastery with passion and sense. The fascinations of the sense and the cravings of a youthful nature now appeared to him as impure, as gross and carnal. This was the hour of darkest trial for him. His musical gifts brought him associates for whose manners and morals he had bitter and undisguised contempt. But his convivial temperament proved too strong for him. It was, therefore, some relief to him when I occasionally kept him company of an evening when he went out for a musical *soirée*.

"I saw and recognised in him a high, ardent and pure nature vibrant and resonant with impassioned sensibilities. He was certainly no sour or cross-grained puritan, no normal hypochondriac;—he would indulge cynically in unconventional language except when he would spare my innocence. He took an almost morbid delight in shocking conventionality in its tabernacles, respectability in its booths; and in the pursuit of his sport would appear other than he was, puzzling and mystifying those outside his inner circle of friends. But in the recesses of his soul he wrestled with the fierce and fell spirit of Desire, the subtle and illusive spirit of Fancy.

"To his repeated quest for some power which would deliver him from bondage and unavailing struggle, I could only point to the sovereignty of Pure Reason and the ineffable peace that comes of identifying the self with the Reason in the Universe. Those were for me days of a victorious Platonic transcendentalism. The experience of a refractory flesh or rebellious temperament had not come to me. I had not sufficient patience for the mood or attitude of mind which surrenders the sovereign right of self-government to artificial props or outside help, such as grace or mediation. I felt no

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need of conciliating feeling and nature in the cult of Reason, nor had had any experience of a will divided in its allegiance to the Self. The experience of a discord between the Ideal and the Real, between Nature and Spirit, had indeed come to me already in an objective way as an outstanding reality and was to come afterwards in subjective fashion though in forms quite other than what obtained in Vivekananda's case. But at the time, his problems were not mine, nor were my difficulties his.

"He confessed that though his intellect was conquered by the universal, his heart owned the allegiance of the individual Ego and complained that a pale, bloodless reason, severeign *de jure* but not *de facto*, could not hold out arms to save him in the hour of temptation. He wanted to know if my philosophy could satisfy his senses, could mediate bodily, as it were, for the soul's deliverance; in short, he wanted a flesh and blood reality visible in form and glory; above all, he cried out for a hand to save, to uplift, to protect, a *sakti* or power outside himself which could cure him of his impotence and cover his nothingness with glory,—a *guru* or master who by embodying perfection in the flesh would still the commotion in his soul.

"At the time, this appeared to me a weakness born of unreason, this demand for perfection in the flesh and for a power out of ourselves to save,—this sacrifice of reason to sense. My young inexperienced self, confronted with this demand of a soul striving with itself, knew not wherewith to satisfy it, and Vivekananda soon after betook himself to the ministers and missionaries of the Brahamo Samaj, asking Brahmos with an unconscious Socratic Irony for an ideal made real to sense, for truth made visible, for a power unto deliverance. Here he had enough, he bitterly complained, of moral disquisitions, principles, intuitions for pabulum which to him appeared tasteless and insipid. He tried diverse

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teachers, creeds and cults, and it was this quest that brought him, though at first in a doubting spirit, to the Paramahamsa of Dakshineswar, who spoke to him with an authority as none had spoken before, and by his *sakti* brought peace into his soul and healed the wounds of his spirit. But his rebellious intellect scarcely yet owned the Master. His mind misgave him and he doubted if the peace which would possess his soul in the presence of the Master was not illusory. It was only gradually that the doubts of that keen intellect were vanquished by the calm assurance that belongs to ocular demonstration.

"I watched with intense interest the transformation that went on under my eyes. The attitude of a young and rampant Vedantist-*cum*-Hegelian-*cum*-Revolutionary like myself towards the cult of religious ecstasy and Kali-worship, may be easily imagined; and the spectacle of a born iconoclast and freethinker like Vivekananda, a creative and dominating intelligence, a tamer of souls, himself caught in the meshes of what appeared to me an uncouth, supernatural mysticism was a riddle which my philosophy of the Pure Reason could scarcely read at the time. But Vivekananda, 'the loved and lost' was loved, and mourned most in what I could not but then regard as his defection; and it was personal feeling, after all, the hated pathological element of individual preference and individual relationship, which most impelled me, when at last I went on what to a home-keeping recluse like myself was an adventurous journey to Dakshineswar, to see and hear Vivekananda's Master, and spent the greater part of a long summer day in the shady and peaceful solitudes of the Temple-garden, returning as the sun set amidst the whirl and rush and roar and the awful gloom of a blinding thunder-storm, with a sense of bewilderment as well moral as physical, and a lurking perception of the truth that the majesty of Law orders the apparently irregular and grotesque,

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that there may be self-mastery in apparent self-alienation, that sense even in its errors is only incipient Reason and that faith in a Saving Power *ab extra* is but the dim reflex of an original act of self-determination. And a significant confirmation of all this came in the subsequent life-history of Vivekananda who, after he had found the firm assurance he sought in the saving Grace and Power of his Master, went about preaching and teaching the creed of the Universal Man, and the absolute and inalienable sovereignty of the Self".

—*Prabuddha Bharata*
April, 1907

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GLOSSARY

Abhīḥ : fearless.

Abheda : identical, non-different.

Advaita : non-duality, a school of Vedānta Philosophy preaching oneness of God, soul and universe. Its chief exponent is Śaṅkarāchārya.

Ātman : the self or soul; the supreme soul; according to Advaita Vedānta it is one with the individual soul.

Ānanda : bliss, eternal joy.

Āśramas : four stages in a man's life (student, householder, anchorate, and ascetic).

Ānanda-maṭh : a novel in Bengali by Bankimchandra Chaṭṭopādhyāya, inspiring patriotism.

Bhagavad-Gītā : the well-known Hindu scripture forming a part of the *Mahābhārata,* and containing a discourse on the essence of Hindu philosophy by Kṛishṇa (believed to be an incarnation of God)

Bhakta : a follower of the path of divine love, a worshipper of Personal God.

Bhakti : love and devotion to God.

Bhakti-yoga : the path of attaining salvation through *Bhakti.*

Brāhmanas : the highest of the four castes often serving as priests.

Bimba leaves : leaves of a kind of creeper (momordica monadelpha).

Chaturbhaṅga : a technical name for the four-fold flexions of an image.

Chhillum : an earthen pot used for smoking by Indian villagers.

Dewan : a minister, a manager.

Dādā : elder brother.

Daridra-Nārāyana : the God in the poor and the miserable.

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Dvaita: the philosophy of Dualism.

Fakir: a beggar, sometimes a religious mendicant.

Gītā: same as Bhagavad-Gītā.

Geruyā: ochre colour, often the ochre-coloured cloth of a monk.

Guru: a spiritual teacher.

Jñānī: a man of philosophic insight.

Jāti: caste or class.

Kālī: the Divine Mother worshipped by the Hindus. The presiding deity of Dakshineswar.

Kāminī: a woman.

Kāminī-Kāñcana: literally the words mean woman and gold, but Rāmakṛishṇa used these words for lust and greed.

Kāñcana: gold, wealth.

Kevala-advaita: unqualified monism.

Maharshi: a great saint; this epithet is often applied to Devendranāth Tagore, the father of Rabindranāth Tagore.

Mahā samādhi: eternal communion with God, eternal sleep.

Mahārājā: ruler (of Native States).

Maṭh: monastery.

Mantram: a sacred formula for invoking deities.

Mahāmāyā: a name of the Goddess Kālī, the Divine Mother. (Lit, the Great Illusion)

Mānusher-nārāyaṇa: the God in man.

Māyā: the illusion which causes the world to appear as real. This is a term of Vedānta Philosophy denoting ignorance obscuring the vision of God.

Mukti: liberation from bondage of the world.

Mleccha: a non-Hindu. This term is generally applied by orthodox Hindus to foreigners.

Nirākāra: the Supreme Being without any form.

Nirvikalpa-samādhi: perfect trance or profound and absolute absorption in divine meditation.

Nirguṇa: quality-less (God).

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Nirvisesha: devoid of all distinctions.

Paramahamsa: the highest stage of a sannyāsin or Hindu monk. An epithet of Śrī Rāmakrishṇa.

Parivrājaka: a wandering mendicant.

Prakriti: the Primordial Nature, disposition or habit.

Śakti: the Creative Energy, the name of the Divine Mother.

Śālagrāma-śilā: a piece of black stone or geode generally found in the river *Gaṇḍaki*, and worshipped by the Hindus as an emblem of *Vishṇu*.

Śivaliṅgam: the phallus emblem of *Śiva*, worshipped by the Hindus.

Saguṇa: endowed with qualities.

Santāna-dharma: principles of the heroic band of ascetics (সন্ন্যাসী) as depicted by Bankimchandra in the Bengali novel Ānanda-maṭh.

Samādhi: complete absorption in meditation.

Samāj: an organisation or Association.

Sannyāsin: a Hindu monk.

Saṁskāra: mental impression left by causes no longer operative and starting from the previous birth. There are three kinds of *Saṁskāras*: *Vega*-impulse, *Sthiti-sthapaka*-elasticity and *bhavana*-reproductive imagination.

Saṁgha: an assemblage, an association.

Sākāra: having a form.

Sādhanā: spiritual discipline.

Sūradās: the famous composer of religious songs in Hindī, dedicated to Krishṇa and sung all over North India. He was blind.

Sūfī: an Islamic mystic.

Tāntrik (Sādhana): follower of the doctrine of the *Tantras* (scriptures containing and teaching the mystical formulas and rites for the worship of *Śiva* and *Śakti*).

Upanishads: the philosophical scriptures of the ancient Hindus.

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Vedas: the most sacred scriptures of the Hindus.

Vānaprastha: the third stage of life as enunciated by the Hindus, the withdrawing from society and retiring into the forest for uninterrupted religious meditation and practices.

Vishaya-vāsanā: desire for wealth and property.

Vedānta-sūtra: a system of Hindu Monistic Philosophy.

Yogin: a Hindu ascetic who practices *Yoga* or deep concentration of mind.

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The greatest living historian of India Dr. R. C. Majumdar was invited by the Universities of Chicago and Pennsylvania, U. S. A. in 1958 to deliver lectures and guide research scholars. At that time he visited most of the important cities where Swamiji delivered lectures, including the place where the Parliament of Religions was held in Chicago.

This book contains some hitherto unknown facts which the profound scholar, with historical insight, had collected during his American tour. In the course of three 'Swami Vivekananda Centenary' Lectures delivered under the auspices of the Patna University, the learned author has reviewed the life of the patriot saint analytically and portrayed graphically the great role played by Vivekananda in the evolution of modern India. This book is a compilation of these lectures, edited and revised by the author himself.

There is a comprehensive appendix, containing specimens of Swamiji's English and Bengali writings, Rabindranath's appreciation and Sir Brojendranath Seal's reminiscences of this great patriot saint, a glossary and an index.

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